

CHECHNYA'S FORGOTTEN WAR • BATTLEGROUND ALASKA

# In These Times

INDEPENDENT NEWS & VIEWS

September 3, 2001

## AMONG THE THUGS



## GEINOVA AND THE NEW LANGUAGE OF PROTEST



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## Editorial

# Back to the Past

In a succession of actions that have commanded world attention, the global justice movement is charting a path through new political terrain, if one that contains hauntingly familiar historical formations.

A neo-feudal aura surrounds the convocations of the WTO, IMF, World Bank and G8. Behind chain-link and barbed-wire battlements, statesmen and bureaucrats draw up pacts that will form the constitution for a one-economy corporate world.

Unimpeded capital movement, free trade, intellectual property protections and other market rights are enshrined in international treaties that liberate transnational corporations from regulation by nation-states. Written out of this process are the world's 6 billion commoners, along with their voting rights, human rights, labor rights, social rights, economic rights and environmental rights.

People are being slowly disenfranchised, unable to control basic aspects of their lives and their communities through the traditional channels of representative government. Europeans exclude hormone-treated U.S. beef, only to find it can't be done without suffering hefty WTO sanctions. Americans pass legislation that protects the world's vanishing sea turtles. Woops, hello WTO, goodbye turtles. People in Massachusetts enact a boycott of companies that do business with Burma's killer generals. Too bad, trade policy trumps human rights.

We are witnessing an unprecedented transfer of power from people and their governments to global institutions whose allegiance is to abstract free-market principle, and whose favored citizens are soulless corporate entities that have the power to shape and break nations.

Making the protection of capital the primary focus of international cooperation means problems that demand world attention lose out. U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan has called for a \$10 billion global health fund to combat AIDS and other infectious diseases. Yet at the G8 summit, leaders pledged only \$1.3 billion (0.4 per cent of Bush's proposed 2002 budget for the U.S. military) to help the 36 million people doomed to a slow death by

AIDS—and made sure to do nothing to upset the pharmaceutical corporations and their AIDS-treatment cartel.

In feudal times, kings and lords held power through divine right. To challenge their authority was to oppose God, a heresy worthy of death. Now enlightened, we view such notions as foolish. Yet the divine right of yore has been replaced by a pantheon of free market verities whose lock on popular thought is so strong that heresy can be kept in check through ridicule. Commenting on the Genoa protesters, the *New York Times*' Thomas Friedman sneered: "To be against globalization is to be against so many things—from cell phones to trade to Big Macs—that it connotes nothing. Which is why the anti-globalization protests have produced noise but nothing that has improved anyone's life."

The good news: The globalization protests show that people are not duped by such inanities. Where faithful flocks once bowed before an all-powerful deity, the revolutions of the 18th and 19th centuries ushered in an era of constitutional democracies. Today's world citizens, imbued with an elixir of liberty, equality and fraternity, are starting to realize that unaccountable global institutions threaten their hard-won political freedoms.

"We are seeing the globalization of citizenship," Saskia Sassen noted in these

**The free market's lock on popular thought is so strong that heresy can be kept in check through ridicule.**

pages in March. The protesters are "conducting themselves as denationalized citizens in a way that interestingly parallels the formalized rights and entitlements that allow corporations to function on an international level."

This transformation is dawning on the G8 leaders, who will next gather at a hideaway in the Canadian Rockies accessible by only one road, and the WTO bureaucrats, who are scheduled to meet in the remote monarchy of Qatar. The latter are no doubt waiting for China's ascension to hold their meeting in Beijing. On Tiananmen Square perchance?

Joel Bleifuss

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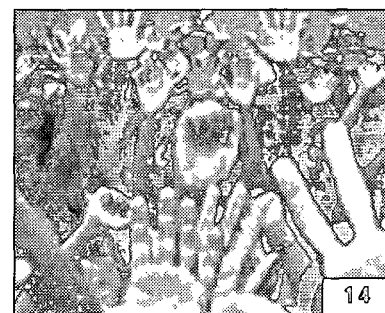
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FILM: *Planet of the Apes*. It's a madhouse.

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By Nato Thompson

I never thought I would be arrested by MTV.



Cover photo: Ecn.Org

## In the Trench Coats

"Violent Reaction" (July 9) struck a familiar chord. I also remember the "disquieting sense of recognition" when I heard about the Columbine killings. Unlike Anthony Chase, I didn't wonder about the killer's sexuality. The trench coats were enough. I wore a trench coat through most of high school—and still do as a rain and winter coat. I have a fondness for black clothing. More to the point, I was an outsider throughout high school—just like killers in schools today.

It's not that Chase is wrong. Surely homosexuals and even those simply accused of being homosexual are being persecuted as outsiders in high schools. It's just that they are not alone in that situation. Just ask the punks, goths, metalheads, freaks, poor, geeks or any members of the other traditional "non-popular" groups, especially those in suburbia, where the lawns aren't the only things that are expected to be manicured and identical.

**Steven Saus**  
Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri

## Blood on All Hands

I just read G. Pascal Zachary's story about Cambodia and was struck by Kassie Neou's statement that "we hoped the Americans would protect us, and they ran away" ("Sounds of Silence," July 9).

I don't know anything about Neou, and maybe I'm misinterpreting this remark, but it seems to exemplify another aspect of Cambodia's reluctance to face the past. The fact is that the massive killings of civilians in Cambodia didn't start in 1975. There was a smaller scale but still horrendous level of killings performed by American B-52's "protecting" Cambodia, and also by Cambodians on both sides of the civil war. The Lon Nol government, and perhaps many of its supporters in Cambodia, was perfectly willing to win their war by totally destroying the Cambodian countryside with American bombs. As everyone surely knows, this policy helped recruit fanatical teen-age boys for the Khmer Rouge.

A real attempt to grapple with the past would include an acknowledgment that, though the Khmer Rouge have the most blood on their hands, they are not the only Cambodian war criminals. Of course, as Christopher Hitchens has been pointing out, one of the biggest war criminals from that era is an American named Henry Kissinger.

**Donald Johnson**  
Nyack, New York

## Sad Ignorance

Salim Muwakkil's editorial piece reinforced yet another misperception of Latinos ("Changing of the Guard," July 23). Muwakkil begins by claiming that "the diversity of the Hispanic population makes coalition-building a tricky proposition." He follows by quoting Yvonne Scruggs-Leftwich, executive director of the Black Leadership Forum, as saying, "a large number of Hispanics are white" and that "the issues that resonate with people of color may not resonate throughout the Hispanic population."

Although we are told in the Census, and elsewhere, that Latinos can be of any race, the fact remains that the great majority of people who identify as such are descendants of European, African and indigenous peoples. While some may be fair-skinned—they do have European ancestors, after all, and thus are as fair as some blacks with European ancestors—that certainly does not make them "white." What this quote (and its uncritical reinforcement) reveals is the sad ignorance that permeates American life when it comes to any knowledge about Latinos.

If we are to harness the political power of a brown-black coalition, we must begin by first learning some very basic things about each other. Such deep and stubborn ignorance breeds this very fear of Latino political power and creates obstacles to coalition-building.

We have a long way to go in creating political solidarity between blacks and browns. Perhaps we could start with some articles in *In These Times* about these people we call Latinos.

**José Orozco**  
Chicago

## Yes, More on Nader

Kudos to both G. William Domhoff and Philip Johnson ("Letters," July 23). Progressives simply cannot afford to split forces between a major party and a nascent third party. As Domhoff points out, a primary fight within the Democratic Party would have been more effective in getting out Nader's message and would not have set the stage for the general election to be stolen by the Republicans.

A lot of time, energy and money is wasted in keeping hundreds of organizations afloat to lobby legislators. Lobbying is a sign of political weakness unless the organization has the money and the votes to defeat recalcitrant office holders. So I agree that we need to run our own candidates.

But we need to go further. By forming chapters called Democrats for Democracy, or whatever, we can go inside the Democratic Party and make it ours. There are plenty of grassroots Democrats who would join with us. I suggest that readers get a copy of the Democratic Party charter for their state and see how easy it would be for a group of determined activists to get elected to the state and national committees. We need to be the ones running the conventions and setting the agenda.

**Mary L. Wentworth**  
Amherst, Massachusetts

The July 23 "Letters" page contained several angry and cynical responses to Michael Moore's assertions that Democrats are using dishonest scare tactics to effectively vilify George W. Bush and simultaneously glorify the legacy of Bill Clinton.

What Nader's campaign did, which they do not recognize or acknowledge, is inspire thousands of our nation's youth to become active in a system they otherwise would have spurned, and it brought to the table a number of issues that were flat-out ignored by Bush and Gore. In an age where the media scorn the youth of this country for their lack of interest in politics, that very same media ridiculed Nader's campaign for having such young followers. This hypocrisy is what we are up against.

Unfortunately, Nader's campaign has worked to divide many citizens with similar beliefs. But I don't hold Nader responsible for this because he has done nothing but speak the truth and argue his side with the utmost respect for anyone who deserves it. Al Gore and Bill Clinton, I'm afraid, did not.

Our work now, is to stop all the divisive bickering and come together to fight for what's right. We are losing a battle against the corporate world that wants to control the very laws that define us as a society. Nader, though, has planted the seeds of a larger movement to end this tyranny. I'll do my part.

**Eli Beckerman**  
Somerville, Massachusetts

## Correction

A credit line was inadvertently dropped from the photo of Terry Southern and William S. Burroughs that accompanied "Southern Exposure" by Chris Barsanti in the August 20 issue. The photograph should have been attributed to Jack Wright III.



## Forgotten War

As the conflict in Chechnya worsens, the media ignore it

By Fred Weir

MOSCOW—Amid signs the world has forgotten their plight, 200 Chechen refugees began a 70-day march to Moscow on August 1 to ask the Kremlin to seek a negotiated end to the 23-month-old war, which already has killed tens of thousands and left a quarter-million homeless. "Our people have been executed, plundered, terrorized and doomed to destruction," reads a statement issued by the organizers, who are affiliated with the Helsinki Group, the oldest Russian human rights organization. "There is no place for Chechens to live peacefully. We only have one right left: to die in a hunger strike or in a peace march at the walls of the Kremlin."

The protesters have few expectations of sympathetic coverage from the Russian media, or of assistance and protection from the government. Along the 1,200-mile route from refugee camps in Ingushetia to Moscow, the marchers—mostly women and children—will carry no signs so as "not to excite the police and not to risk lives."

Their fears of violence are well-grounded. "The human rights situation in Chechnya has become catastrophic, and seems to grow worse every time the Russian authorities declare the war is over and life in Chechnya is normalizing," says Sergei Grigoryants, a Soviet-era dissident who heads the Glasnost Foundation, a media and human rights watchdog group. "To be a Chechen anywhere in Russia today is to be damned to pain and persecution."

Chechnya, an ethnically and culturally distinct republic of about 1 million people on Russia's volatile southern

flank, declared independence as the Soviet Union was dissolving in 1991. Unlike the USSR's 15 "union republics," such as Russia, Ukraine, Kazakhstan or Estonia—which had the right to secede under the Soviet Constitution—Chechnya's claim went unrecognized by Moscow and the international community. In 1994, Russian troops invaded, only to be defeated and forced to accept an inconclusive peace 20 months later. That war killed an estimated 80,000 people, mostly civilians.

After a string of still-unsolved terrorist bombings in Russian cities in 1999—which the Kremlin blamed on Chechen rebels—the army invaded Chechnya again, moving behind a screen of indiscriminate heavy weapons that demolished dozens of towns,

heavy fighting, and any semblance of central command and control was shattered. Yet despite repeated declarations of victory, Moscow has shelved plans to withdraw its 80,000-strong military force from the region, and is even debating increases. "The conflict has become a low-intensity guerrilla war that takes a steady toll of our troops, week in and week out," says Yuli Gladkeyvich, an expert with the AVN independent military news agency. "The general staff is now asking for a big expansion of forces to control the situation. Basically, they want to put a garrison in every town and village of Chechnya."

As the Russian military's frustration has mounted, so have depredations against civilians under its control. In early July, troops in western Chechnya launched a series of security sweeps, known as *zachistki* (cleansings), that degenerated into such savagery that even the Kremlin-appointed Chechen governor and a top Russian general made unprecedented public protests. In the towns of Sernovodsk and Assinovskaya, troops rounded up more than 1,000 men and beat, robbed and tortured them, some with electric shock. Families were able to retrieve these men from detention only after paying bribes of around 2,000 rubles (about \$65) each. Pro-Moscow Chechen leader Akhmad Kadyrov complained that soldiers even stole \$2,000 provided by his administration for paying local teachers' salaries, and

then tossed grenades into the school. "The counter-terrorist operation is now directed against the peaceful population, not the bandits," Kadyrov says.

The acting commander of Russian forces in Chechnya, Gen. Vladimir Moltenskoï, admitted to journalists that his forces had committed "large-scale crimes" in the operation, which they carried out "in a clumsy, lawless fashion, destroying everything and then pretending they knew nothing about it." Within a day, however, Moltenskoï withdrew his statement.

Publicity surrounding the incident led



Col. Yuri Budanov is charged with the rape and murder of 18-year-old Chechen Mada Kungayeva.

including the capital city of Grozny, and forced more than 200,000 refugees to flee to neighboring Ingushetia. "The level of violence in this round has been much higher than in the first conflict," says Pavel Felgenhauer, an independent military expert. "Far greater numbers of civilians have been killed, maimed and made homeless. It is a war without mercy."

Since invading, Russian forces have occupied all but a few remote mountainsides of the tiny Caucasus republic. Chechnya's organized military units were dispersed after several months of

SERGEY VINAVSKIY/NEWSMAKERS



to charges being laid against six Russian servicemen for kidnapping, robbery and exceeding their authority. But the official atmosphere leaves it doubtful any of the accused will ever be punished. Asked about the excesses in Sernovodsk and Assinovskaya at a recent Kremlin press conference, President Vladimir Putin said such security sweeps were necessary. "One of the tactics of radical fundamentalists [the rebels] is to attempt to provoke a response attack in order to rouse the local population against federal forces," he said. "I am not sure the federal authorities always succeed in not yielding to such provocations."

Only one Russian soldier so far has been put on trial for crimes against civilians in Chechnya. The case of Col. Yuri Budanov, charged with raping and murdering a Chechen woman, is still ongoing. But Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov, speaking to reporters recently, said Budanov is just a victim of circumstances. "He is an honest soldier who has found himself in a difficult legal spot," Ivanov said.

Though most experts agree the Chechen war is growing more bloody and brutal as it grinds on, the world can expect to hear far less about it. In late July, the Russian army announced sweeping new restrictions that require any journalist entering Chechnya to be accompanied by a military press officer at all times. The rules are aimed mainly at

foreign journalists. The Russian media mostly have stopped covering the conflict, beyond reporting official government and military statements, since the last independent television network, NTV, was taken over by a state-run company earlier this year. "There is no longer a spectrum of information available in the Russian media, except for a few small independent outlets that are under increasing pressure," says Lyudmilla Telen, a leading political journalist. "We have Kremlin-edited news on most channels now, most of the time."

Public backing for the war has plunged from 70 percent in October 1999 to 35 percent in June, according to the Center for Public Opinion Research in Moscow. No longer talking of quick victory, a top Kremlin official recently compared Chechnya to Britain's quagmire in Northern Ireland, and said the conflict could go on for decades. "A whole new generation of rebel fighters is growing up in the refugee camps, accustomed to violence as a way of life and hating Russia," says Alexander Goltz, an independent military expert. "The Kremlin has alienated all potential allies and burned its bridges. There seems no exit from this bloody mess. It will just go on and on."

Against all this, can a couple hundred desperate Chechen protesters make any difference, even if they're allowed to reach Red Square? ■

## Coke is It

### Steelworkers sue soft-drink giant over murders of Colombian union leaders

By Garry M. Leech

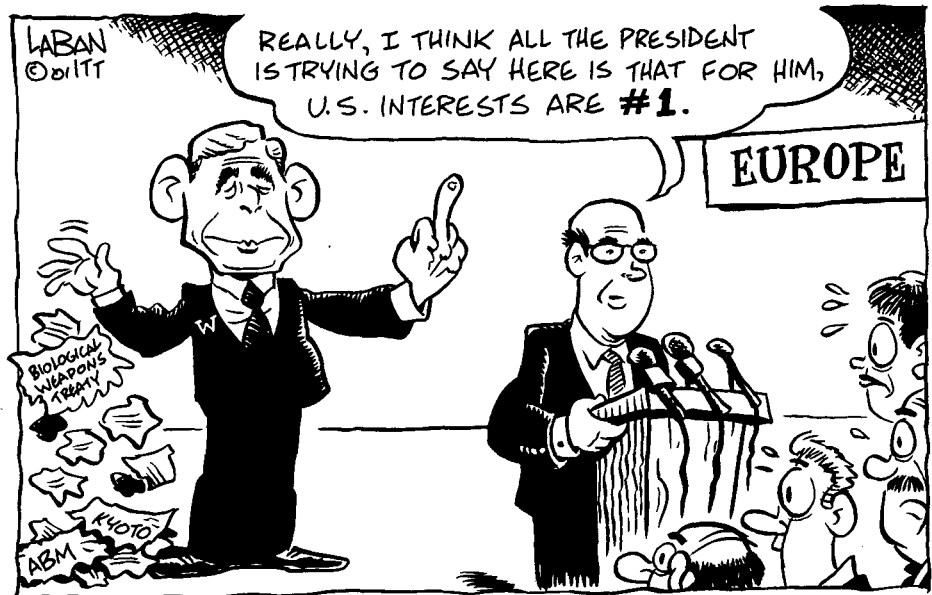
A lawsuit filed in a Miami federal court accuses the Coca-Cola Company, its Colombian subsidiary and business affiliates of collaborating with paramilitary death squads to threaten, kidnap and murder union leaders at its Colombian bottling plants.

The lawsuit was filed on July 20 by the United Steelworkers of America and the Washington-based International Labor Rights Fund on behalf of Sinaltrainal, the union that represents Colombian Coca-Cola workers, the estate of murdered union leader Isidro Segundo Gil and five other unionists who worked for Coca-Cola and were targeted by paramilitaries. "We are filing this case to show our solidarity with the embattled trade unions of Colombia," says Steelworkers President Leo Gerard.

Colombia has long been the most dangerous country in the world for union members with 3,800 murdered in the past 15 years. Three out of every five trade unionists killed in the world are Colombian. Last year alone, 128 Colombian labor leaders were assassinated. Most of the killings have been carried out by the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC), a right-wing paramilitary group that views union organizers as subversives. The most recent killing occurred on June 21 when Sinaltrainal leader Oscar Dario Soto Polo was gunned down.

The plaintiffs are claiming U.S. jurisdiction under the Alien Tort Claims Act, which allows non-U.S. citizens to sue Americans for violations of international law. According to the complaint, Coca-Cola Colombia, as well as two Florida-based companies, Panamco and Bebidas y Alimentos, which bottle and distribute Coca-Cola products in Colombia, are legally required to abide by Coca-Cola's code of conduct regarding their operations and labor relations. Coca-Cola reserves the right to regulate environmental protections, impose

Terry LaBan





standards concerning employee qualifications, and monitor treatment of employees. The plaintiffs are seeking an unspecified amount of compensation and an end to the human rights abuses. "Their code of conduct shows that they are legally responsible," says Terry Collingsworth of the International Labor Rights Fund, an attorney for the plaintiffs. "These companies come up with these codes and then don't enforce them." (Coca-Cola denies any wrongdoing.)

Among the plaintiffs' evidence that Coca-Cola collaborated with paramilitaries is a 1996 incident in which Ariosto Milan Mosquera, plant manager at Bebidas y Alimentos' bottling facility in Carepa, publicly stated that he had ordered paramilitaries to quash the union. Union members claim that Mosquera often socialized with paramilitary fighters and even provided them with Coca-Cola products for their fiestas. Shortly after Mosquera's pronouncement, local members of Sinaltrainal began receiving threats from the paramilitaries.

On September 27, 1996, Sinaltrainal sent a letter to the Colombian headquarters of both Bebidas y Alimentos and Coca-Cola Colombia informing them of Mosquera's threats against the union and requesting intervention on their behalf. On December 5, Bebidas y Alimentos employee and local Sinaltrainal executive board member Isidro Segundo Gil was killed by paramilitaries inside the Carepa bottling plant. The other union board members were also threatened with death if they did not leave town.

Two days later, paramilitaries entered the plant and told employees they had three choices: resign from the union, leave Carepa, or be killed. According to eyewitnesses, the workers were then led into the manager's office to sign union resignation forms prepared by the company. Bebidas y Alimentos owner Richard Kirby, who is also a defendant in the case, says the company has no control over paramilitary activity and that the facts regarding the murder of Segundo Gil have been distorted. "You don't use them, they use you," he says. "Nobody tells the paramilitaries what to do. One day they showed up at the plant. They shut it



**Paramilitaries scrawled graffiti on a wall after a raid on Peque, Colombia that left 11 dead.**

down, put everyone against the wall and started shooting. Now it has been turned around so that it's our fault."

The targeting of labor leaders is not limited to Carepa. In 1996, at Panamco's Bucaramanga bottling plant, local members of Sinaltrainal went on a five-day strike to protest the company's elimination of employee medical insurance. After the strike ended, according to the complaint, Panamco chief of security Jose Alejo Aponte, accused five members of the local Sinaltrainal executive board of planting a bomb in the plant.

The five union leaders (three of whom are plaintiffs in the lawsuit) were imprisoned based on charges filed, according to official court documents, under the name of Coca-Cola, not Panamco. The union leaders were released six months later when the regional prosecutor declared the plaintiffs could not have planted the alleged bomb because it was never there.

According to the plaintiffs, local management at Panamco's Barrancabermeja plant have sided openly with the paramilitaries in the civil war and publicly accused Sinaltrainal members of being guerrillas. Given the volatile situation in Barrancabermeja, home to the most intense urban warfare in Colombia, such an accusation is tantamount to a death sentence.

## The Well Oiled

On August 1, 36 House Democrats joined with 186 Republicans to give George W. Bush and the oil industry a major victory in their plans to open Alaska's Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to oil drilling.

The House voted 223 to 206 to defeat an amendment, sponsored by Democrat Edward J. Markey of Massachusetts, that would have eliminated the proposal. Thirty-four Republicans voted to ban drilling, while 36 Democrats voted to allow it. Shortly after midnight, the House passed the entire measure on a vote of 240 to 189.

The 36 Democrats are: Joe Baca, California; Marion Berry, Arkansas; Sanford Bishop Jr., Georgia; Allen Boyd, Florida; Robert Brady, Pennsylvania; Brad Carson, Oklahoma; James Clyburn, South Carolina; Robert 'Bud' Cramer, Alabama; Calvin Dooley, California; Chet Edwards, Texas; Gene Green, Texas; Ralph Hall, Texas; Earl Hilliard, Alabama; William Jefferson, Louisiana; Christopher John, Louisiana; Paul Kanjorski, Pennsylvania; Ken Lucas, Kentucky; Frank Mascara, Pennsylvania; Alan Mollohan, West Virginia; John Murtha, Pennsylvania; James Oberstar, Minnesota; Solomon Ortiz, Texas; Collin Peterson, Minnesota; David Phelps, Illinois; Silvestre Reyes, Texas; Mike Ross, Arkansas; Max Sandlin, Texas; Ronnie Shows, Mississippi; Ike Skelton, Missouri; Charles Stenholm, Texas; John Tanner, Tennessee; Gene Taylor, Mississippi; Bennie Thompson, Mississippi; Edolphus Towns, New York; James Traficant, Ohio; Jim Turner, Texas.

Source: [Chicago.indymedia.org](http://Chicago.indymedia.org)

The plaintiffs also are in the process of filing an injunction against Panamco calling for them to cease and desist from tampering with witnesses. Panamco, meanwhile, has issued a public statement denying the allegations contained in the lawsuit. According to Collingsworth, the company then presented the denial to its employees and ordered them to sign a blank piece of paper that could be used against them later.

"There is no question that Coke knew about, and benefits from, the systematic repression of unions at its bottling plants in Colombia," Collingsworth says. "This case will make the company accountable." ■



# Who is that Masked Man?

New York police admit profiling anarchists

By Eric Laursen

NEW YORK—This city was treated to a most unusual political trial in June, when 12 anarchists appeared in Manhattan Criminal Court charged with "masquerading in public" on May Day 2000. It was the first prosecution in decades under a 150-year-old state law that Mayor Rudolph Giuliani dusted off two years ago to block a Ku Klux Klan rally.

Thanks to an earlier court decision, the non-jury trial gave the anarchists a rare opportunity to discuss and defend their beliefs in court—including the black clothing and bandannas that have become common at

protests. But perhaps most important, officers who took the witness stand admitted what critics have long charged—that New York police allowed out-of-town police to attend rallies here and videotape them to profile activists in preparation for protests in other cities. Judge Ellen Coyne's ruling is expected in mid-August.

The case concerns the arrest of a group of anarchists just before an annual May Day march. Police amassed along the parade route had received a briefing from an NYPD "disorder expert" that the crowd could include "WTO-Seattle-type protesters." A police surveillance videotape shows that the anarchists, some of whom were wearing bandannas and some not, were

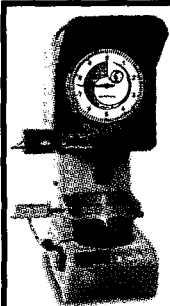


ERIC LAURSEN

The NYPD's masked marauders.

standing quietly when they were suddenly jumped by police, wrestled to the ground and arrested.

The defendants were held in jail for as long as 36 hours on a range of charges including violation of the mask



## Appall-o-Meter

By Dave Mulcahey

### Just Following Orders 6.7

In a sanguinary reprise of their age-old antagonism, jock and nerd skirmished last month on the parched plains of DeKalb, Illinois. The field of battle, it seems, had been double-booked. Twenty or so members of the Northern Illinois University football team showed up at Huskie Stadium for a practice session, only to discover that the field was occupied by the Capital Regiment, a drum and bugle corps from Ohio that was in town for a national competition.

According to press reports, NIU strength and conditioning coach John Binkowski parleyed with the leader of the regiment but received no satisfaction. He returned to his men, hustled them into formation, and ordered them to charge. What followed was a confusion of beefcake, busbies and brass. When the dust settled, several corpsmen had fallen, one with a severely sprained ankle and another with a fractured jaw.

But if the Huskies won the battle, they lost the war. The encounter had been videotaped, and two defensive tackles were hauled in by police. Anthony Falbo was subsequently cleared, but Brian Peterson faces

felony battery charges. Coach Binkowski has been fired. Falbo copped the Nuremberg defense: "In my years of experience, in that situation, you never second-guess the coach," he told the *Chicago Tribune*, "especially when you're running with a group of your teammates."

### The Violent Majority 8.0

When it comes to kicking countercultural ass, Dirty Harry could learn a few things from the police force in Kazakhstan's capital. Almaty's finest have become notoriously zealous in their sweeps of rockers, anarchists, artists, gays and various unkempt types, according to a report by the Institute for War and Peace Reporting. Those caught in the dragnet can expect extortion, beatings and even more extreme forms of torture.

A local punk rocker was confined recently to "the water tank," a four-foot-high cell half-filled with cold water. To avoid drowning in the tank, the victim

must remain crouching. An Almaty doctor reports having treated numerous young victims of this torture, who generally develop urinary tract disorders as a result.

Some cops are even beating up on geeks, including enthusiasts of *The Lord of the Rings*. The Tolkienists protest that they pose no threat to public order, and they vow to stand up for their rights. "We are perfectly legal," protested one. "We spend most of our time in the mountains. We only hold conventions in the city twice a year. ... The police don't like it, but we aren't going to stop. It's our entire life."



TERRY LABAN



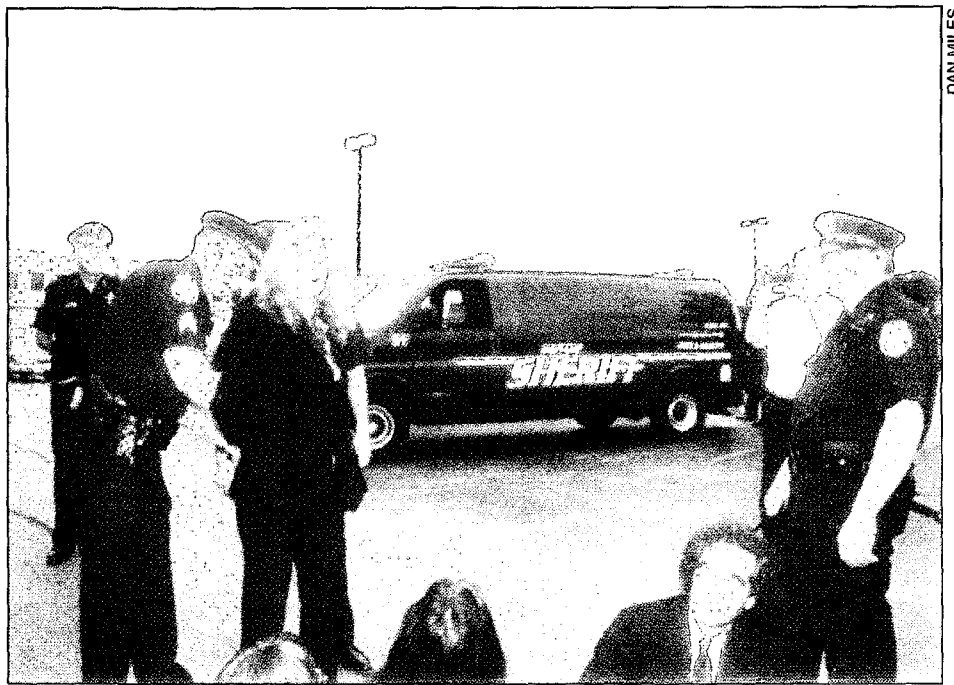
law, which prohibits two or more persons from "congregating" in public while wearing masks to obscure their identities. The vaguely worded statute was adopted back in the 1840s, when the state was trying to suppress the "Rent Wars," a series of tenant farmer uprisings against landlords. The mask law languished for many years, but other cities facing large-scale political protests—including Philadelphia, Windsor, Ontario and Quebec—have adopted their own anti-mask laws.

"If Judge Coyne comes down in favor of the anarchists being able to participate in political events while wearing masks," says Beth Haroules of the New York Civil Liberties Union, "the message to the city is they shouldn't be using loitering laws to clear the streets of people expressing political beliefs." The NYCLU has filed a separate request with federal Judge Harold Baer to declare the mask law unconstitutional.

Attorney Ron Kuby, who represents the anarchists, compares the case to those of Chinese, South Korean and Iranian activists who have worn masks at demonstrations in those countries for fear of reprisal. "At least some of these defendants were aware that there was ongoing surveillance of their movement in preparation for the [then upcoming] Republican National Convention," which Kuby says justifies their wearing masks. "Indeed, the Philadelphia police were there [at the May Day rally] taking pictures of them."

At trial, Kuby grilled Michael Fox, who was in charge of the arrests, and Thomas Graham, a deputy inspector with the NYPD's disorder control unit, about their own knowledge of anarchism. Neither was familiar with the leading anarchist thinkers Kuby mentioned: Kropotkin, Bakunin, Berkman—and Graham testified that a 60 Minutes segment was his principal source about the movement.

Fox also acknowledged for the first time that the NYPD and other police departments have been cooperating to profile demonstrators whom they suspect of being "Seattle-type" activists. This included officers from Philadelphia and Morristown, New Jersey, some of



Bonnie Raitt and other protesters are arrested at Boise Cascade's Chicago-area offices.

whom were recognized by the defendants from those cities, and who were in New York videotaping the anarchists before they were arrested.

Although the defendants expect an acquittal, that alone will not eliminate the mask law as a threat to activists. "Even if we can prove to them that prosecution is fruitless in these cases, that doesn't prevent the police from making an arrest," Kuby notes. "Either the district attorney has to tell them that it's not prosecutable, or the new mayor of New York has to say 'don't do it.'"

This year's May Day was again marred by arrests when police charged a group of activists who were performing street theater at a march in support of immigrant workers. Police arrested five—one for violating the mask law. The NYCLU is collecting activists' arrest stories going back to 1998 for a possible class-action lawsuit against the NYPD.

Haroules is optimistic about the anarchists' chances of an acquittal, noting that the courts have become "a lot more jaundiced in their evaluation of the tactics the police are using." But for her, the real goal is to change police action: "Unfortunately, that stance hasn't filtered down to the behavior of the cop on the street." ■

## Massive Attack

### Logging allies launch coordinated effort to cripple Rainforest Action Network

By Hank Hoffman

Clearly believing that the best defense is a good offense, logging giant Boise Cascade and its right-wing allies have launched a coordinated assault on Rainforest Action Network's funding and reputation. RAN initiated a high-profile campaign last fall to pressure Boise Cascade to stop logging old-growth forests and to implement sustainable forest-management practices.

Although public opinion runs strongly against continued destruction of the dwindling old-growth stands, Boise Cascade remains undeterred. The company logs old-growth on public lands, and, according to RAN, is one of the largest purchasers of old-growth timber from national forests. Boise Cascade also was the leading industry opponent of the Forest Service rule that would have preserved 58.5 million acres of wilderness by banning new road construction.

DAN MILES

The anti-RAN campaign has included letters to the group's individual and foundation donors from Boise Cascade that brand RAN as "reckless, lawless radical activists lashing out against modern society." At the same time, Frontiers of Freedom, a right-wing think tank founded by former U.S. Sen. Malcolm Wallop (R-Wyoming), is attacking RAN's charitable tax status. And an anti-RAN Web site (ranamuck.org) published by Ron Arnold of the wise-use Center for the Defense of Free Enterprise (CDFE), accuses the group of "pursuing an anti-capitalist 'social change' agenda to disempower every kind of business and industry that supports the modern world."

Boise Cascade, Frontiers of Freedom and CDFE all accuse RAN of having links to the Earth Liberation Front, a radical monkeywrenching group. ELF claimed responsibility for burning down Boise Cascade's Monmouth, Oregon office in December 1999. RAN, however, explicitly disavows property destruction and violence. "We think it's a smear campaign, pure and simple,"

says RAN campaign director Michael Brune. "Boise Cascade is quite defensive and becoming desperate to defend the status quo, so they need to resort to dirty tricks to discredit their accusers."

Besides meeting with Boise Cascade executives, RAN's tactics have included a public information campaign and non-violent civil disobedience. On March 29, a couple of RAN activists dropped a banner declaring "Boise Cascade: An American Disgrace" across the street from the corporation's Boise, Idaho headquarters. Supporters of RAN also protested outside the Boise Cascade Office Products building in the Chicago suburb of Itasca on July 25. Twenty people—including singer Bonnie Raitt, activist Julia Butterfly Hill and former Doors drummer John Densmore—were arrested for trespassing.

RAN's civil disobedience is cited in a June 18 letter from Frontiers of Freedom director George Landrith to the Internal Revenue Service. In an effort reminiscent of the Reagan-era "defund the left" campaign and Richard Nixon's use of the IRS against

his political enemies, Frontiers of Freedom calls on the IRS to investigate RAN and revoke its 501(c)3 nonprofit tax status. Under U.S. tax law, such nonprofits are exempt from corporate income tax and eligible to solicit tax-deductible contributions. In return, they accept strict limitations on legislative lobbying and are prohibited from participating in elections.

"No one should think for a moment that this is anything other than an attempt to put RAN out of business," says Jim Wheaton, founder and senior counsel for First Amendment Project, which is providing legal support to the group. He notes that loss of 501(c)3 status would severely curtail RAN's ability to secure foundation grants.

A Frontiers of Freedom press release describes their RAN complaint as a "test case." If successful, the strategy could be applied against other "radical environmental groups that are skirting our nation's tax laws." "It's really pretty simple," says Frontiers of Freedom spokesman Jason Wright. "If you take taxpayer dollars, you ought not to get involved in controversial issues."

Nonsense, says John Simon, who teaches nonprofit tax law at Yale University: "Merely the fact that you are attacking the policies of corporations or any other institutions in our society—government, foundations, newspapers, whatever—is not a ground for disqualification."

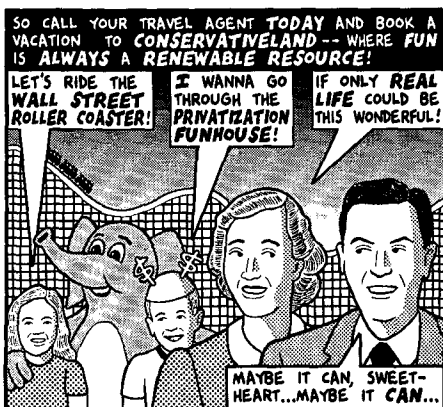
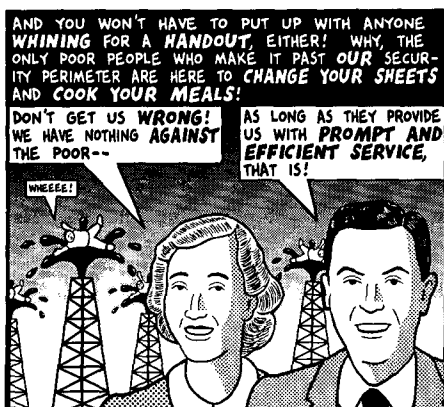
Boise Cascade spokesman Michael Moser denies the company is part of a coordinated offensive to shut down RAN, although he does acknowledge that the company sent letters denouncing RAN to the group's funders.

If the IRS chooses to investigate the tax complaint, the process is closed. RAN may only participate by responding to IRS requests for information. RAN Executive Director Chris Hatch describes it as "having a sword hanging over us for the indefinite future."

Still, Hatch says the anti-RAN campaign will not cause the group to back off. "It has reinforced our commitment to civil disobedience when it's appropriate," Hatch says. "Should there be civil disobedience, and does the destruction of the forests warrant civil disobedience? We quite openly say yes, and we support folks who want to do it." ■

## THIS MODERN WORLD

BY TOM TOMORROW





# The Brame Game

Unions are against new  
NLRB candidate's religion

By Hans Johnson

WASHINGTON—Even as the Bush administration is erasing reforms—like ergonomics regulations aimed at preventing workplace injuries—it has desperately claimed to be moderate on labor issues. “The president is restoring the balance and the middle ground,” White House spokesman Ari Fleischer recently intoned.

Such rhetoric will continue to defy reality if Bush nominates J. Robert Brame to head the National Labor Relations Board. Brame, who served on the five-person board between 1997 and 2000 as a result of deals between the Clinton administration and staunch conservatives in the Senate, made his name as a dissenting voice whose quirky, sweeping opinions raised eyebrows. Now they are raising red flags. No mere management ally, Brame is a standard-bearer for the religious right whose ties to the obscure Christian reconstructionist movement reveal an ardent foe of regulations protecting worker safety and labor unions’ place in society.

In addition to his work on labor law, Brame serves on the board of American Vision, a Christian reconstructionist group whose mission is “the restoration of America’s biblical foundation.” Many reconstructionists interpret the Old Testament as prescribing minimal and very rigid forms of government, with churches playing key roles and workers groups playing none. The head of American Vision’s board of directors is Gary DeMar, who has advocated killing homosexuals and capital punishment for abortion providers. As longtime religious-right observer Fred Clarkson has written of reconstructionists, “They would eliminate not only democracy, but also many of its manifestations, such as labor unions, civil rights laws and public schools.”

Far more than a hobby, Brame’s reconstructionist sympathies are at the heart of his approach to questions of

## Green Day

The Green Party continues gain ground on the national stage. Delegates from the Association of State Green Parties (ASGP) voted to establish a new official national party, the Green Party of the United States, at a convention held on July 30 in Santa Barbara, California.

Although different factions of the Green Party exist in the United States, none has been legally recognized by the Federal Election Commission. To become an officially recognized party, ASGP must file papers with the FEC for national committee status and, from there, the Green Party of the United States.

authority in the workplace. During his two-and-a-half-year stint on the NLRB, Brame penned strident dissents with a penchant for setting aside precedent and straitjacketing the right to unionize. There was almost no form of employer coercion that Brame didn’t deem a legitimate form of “free speech.”

In the 1998 *Hale Nani* case, which involved an employer’s rule curbing dissemination of materials during an organizing drive, Brame defended discriminatory rules for literature distribution during union drives. Employers’ “free speech right,” he wrote, “embraces the right to address employees in mandatory meetings held on company time without affording equal time to the union or to pro-union employees.” Brame added: “I disagree that such discrimination amounts either to objectionable or unfair labor practice conduct.”

Yet in *Randell Warehouse*, a case decided in 1999 concerning union reps photographing workers receiving leaflets, Brame rejected a longstanding precedent that applied different standards to employer and union conduct, based in part on the power that employers hold over workers in personnel action and withholding wages. He decried the longstanding “‘double standard’ under which an employer photographing or videotaping is judged as presumptively unlawful or objectionable, while similar union conduct is evaluated under the circumstances.” In doing so, he seemed to forget the double standard for distributing materials that he defended in *Hale Nani*.

Greens have worked primarily on grassroots efforts and now hold 91 local offices nationwide. “Greens will win more campaigns by recruiting and supporting viable candidates who will challenge Democrats and Republicans at every level of government,” says Santa Monica, California Mayor Mike Feinstein, who is a member of the ASGP. “We will aggressively register new members to vote for our candidates. And we will work to change our undemocratic, winner-take-all electoral system to a fair and inclusive system of proportional representation.”

Desiree Evans

In *Westwood Health Care Center*, which involved punitive action against health care workers during an organizing drive, Brame defended employer interrogation of workers during a union campaign, saying that a boss telling an employee that she has to choose sides is “not coercive,” even if it comes after two other workers have been dismissed amid allegations that they were sympathetic to the union drive. Brame said, “Workers can only be the beneficiaries of such an exchange,” which he characterized as embodying an “employer’s right to freedom of speech.”

In other cases, Brame argued against medical interns’ right to organize and rejected the obligation of employers to bargain with workers supplied to them by a temp agency. He also disputed the ability of unions to charge non-members who are covered under a union-negotiated contract with certain expenses.

In doing so, he denied any link between unions and higher wages. Numerous accounts from experts that bore out what was called a “positive and significant” correlation, with one expert calling it so well-documented as to be “taken for granted by institutional labor economists.” Still, Brame showcased his dour view of unions, asserting that they offer merely “attenuated benefits” for workers “only in the most distant way.”

If allowed to advance his beliefs as part of a Republican majority on the board, Brame would do more than dismantle workers rights by overturning established precedent. He seems poised, as Bush might say, to be a divider, not a uniter. ■

**T**he Kodiak Launch Complex was marketed to Alaskans as one of the nation's first commercial space ports. Many promises were made to lure public support: High-paying, year-round jobs. Better roads. A fancy cultural center. New schools with real astronauts helping out in the classrooms. Peace and prosperity.

The whole multibillion-dollar project, located on Narrow Cape, a remote tip of Kodiak Island 250 miles west of Anchorage, was supposed to be run by a state-chartered outfit called the Alaska Aerospace Development Corporation. In 1996, the state and the feds turned over 3,500 acres of public land for the project, which would house two launching pads, a space vehicle assembly plant, a radar station, a command center and other support facilities. Its backers claimed that a new age of commercial space traffic was dawning, and that Kodiak Island was one of the world's best locations for "launching telecommunications, remote sensing, and space science payloads" into orbit.

Local skeptics weren't thrilled at the prospect of their wilderness redoubt being transformed into an Alaskan Cape Canaveral. After all, Kodiak was already one of Alaska's most popular tourist destinations, with tens of thousands of people coming to fish for salmon and halibut, hike the wilderness, photograph the great grizzlies and view one of the few thriving populations of gray whales in the Pacific—people who might think twice about visiting with missiles screaming overhead. Others worried their villages might be vulnerable to misfires and toxic fallout. Some wondered how Kodiak, one of the most remote islands in North America, could possibly be the epicenter of a profitable commercial enterprise. There were suspicions that something a bit more nefarious might be in the offing.

**T**hese concerns were briskly swept aside by state and federal officials. A brief environmental analysis was slapped together, with much of the data concealed from public scrutiny, and construction began in 1998. Not long thereafter, the Alaska Aerospace Development Corporation announced it was having financial problems, and the federal government came to its rescue with a timely handout and the promise of sustained appropriations. But there was a catch: Instead of sending into orbit commercial satellites and the cremated remains of rich Trekkies, the Kodiak site was going to work very closely with the Air Force and its legion of defense contractors.

There's some compelling evidence that this was the plan all along, starting with the man tapped to head the Alaska Aerospace Development Corporation: Pat Ladner, a former Air Force lieutenant colonel who served in the '80s as the program manager for a secretive project called the Single

# Battleground Alaska

## From the Aleutians to the Arctic plains, Star Wars is coming to the last frontier

By Jeffrey St. Clair



Stage Rocket Technology Program (SSTR). This program was a component of the initial burst of funding for Reagan's version of Star Wars. But by the early '90s, with public and congressional support lagging, the Pentagon made a decision to "privatize" much of the development and testing for many of its Star Wars projects. Ladner retired from the Air Force in 1993 and joined the Alaska Aerospace Development Corporation. The facilities at Kodiak were designed by the Defense Advanced Research Project Agency, the same shadowy wing of the Pentagon that had supervised the SSTR program on Ladner's watch.

So the launching pads at Narrow Cape turned out to be just another off-shoot of the National Missile Defense program. On November 5, 1998 the Kodiak site fired off its first rocket, an experimental Air Force missile that is part of the Pentagon's "atmospheric interceptor technology program." The rocket arced across the sky for more than 1,000 miles before slamming into the Pacific somewhere off the southern Oregon coast. A second rocket was launched from Kodiak on September 15, 1999.

Since those initial launches, a steady stream of Star Wars experiments have been ongoing at Kodiak, projects steered there by the guiding hand of Sen. Ted Stevens, the ranking member of the Appropriations Committee. Stevens is a master at manipulating the flow of federal dollars back to military



projects in Alaska, often as last-minute amendments to Defense Supplemental Appropriations bills, where they receive little public scrutiny. This is how Star Wars has continued almost uninterrupted since its inception in 1983.

The next round of tests at Kodiak will involve a much more potent and unnerving rocket, a Polaris missile packed with a payload of simulated nuclear warheads. Sometime in August, a Polaris will be fired from Kodiak and streak 4,300 miles to Kwajalein Atoll in the Marshall Islands of the South Pacific, where interceptor missiles will try to shoot it down. Over the next five years, Kodiak is slated to launch more than 20 Polaris rockets. (The other Polaris launching site is on the Hawaiian island of Kauai.)

Even though the test rockets only pack simulated nukes, they are still dangerous. The missiles' three-stage booster engines carry highly toxic materials, including magnesium, hydrazine and radioactive thorium. The boosters fall to the ocean and are not recovered. The exhaust trail itself leaves behind a poisonous plume of smoke. "Each rocket first stage releases a minimum of 8,000 pounds of aluminum oxide at lift-off," warns Brad Stevens (no relation to the senator), a biologist with the National Marine Fisheries Service in Kodiak. "Much of this will wind up in local streams that drain into Twin Lakes and the Fossil Beach tidepools and kelp beds, which provide nutrients and shelter for juvenile marine species. Documented fish kills in waterways around Cape Kennedy attest to the fact that rocket emissions can destroy aquatic life." (Also under the flight path of the missiles are rocky beaches on small islands that serve as haul-outs for Stellar sea lions, an endangered species.)

One of the launch trajectories will send missiles over the fishing villages of Akhiok and Old Harbor and across one of the world's most pristine salmon spawning grounds. The Pentagon has told the people living there not to worry: They will clear the waters of boats before each launch and build two hardened bunkers in each town. The bunkers serve as stark reminders that the townspeople not only are potential victims of an accident, but a target of Russian and Chinese defense systems designed to counter Star Wars.

**A**laskans are old hands at this by now. Indeed, there's a grim irony in the fact that Alaska, the most frigid of states, has been one of the most ravaged battlegrounds of the Cold War. Over the past 55 years, Alaska has witnessed: early warning radar erected onto the fragile tundra in the early '50s; the intentional irradiation of more than 100 unwitting Alaskan native peoples in 1955 to test the acclimation of humans to sub-zero temperatures; Project Chariot, a mad scheme to excavate a naval harbor at Cape Thompson by exploding five nuclear bombs at the mouth of a coastal creek (the bombs were never detonated, but the site was left a toxic and radioactive mess); and the Cannikin nuclear test in 1971, one of the largest ever, which permanently contaminated Amchitka Island and continues to ooze radioactive debris into the Bering Sea. Kodiak alone already suffers from 17

toxic dumps left by previous Pentagon operations on the island. Even the push to transform the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge into a forest of oil derricks has lately been justified on the grounds of national security.

So it shouldn't come as much of a surprise that Alaska seems poised to bear the brunt of Bush's new Star Wars plan. The Kodiak site is just one of more than a dozen enclaves of assorted anti-missile paraphernalia that will be scattered across the state, from the Aleutians to the Arctic plains. In addition to Kodiak, Congress approved the construction of a \$500 million radar dome on remote Shemya Island in the Aleutians. Shemya, the site of an old CIA listening post, is more than 1,500 miles from the nearest active military base. A top Pentagon official told the *Washington Post* that it posed difficult construction problems, and that when completed the site would be "very, very vulnerable" to attack.

Ted Stevens also has pushed to make Fort Greely Military Reserve, an Army outpost on the Tanana River about 90 miles southeast of Fairbanks, a base for the 100 interceptor missiles once the Stars Wars scheme becomes operational. Constructed in 1945, Fort Greely already has a dark history as a kind of outdoor laboratory for some of the Army's most malign experiments. In 1953, the Army authorized the use of Fort Greely and the adjacent Gerstle River Proving Ground to test chemical and biological weapons. Of course, these operations were kept secret from the surrounding population of homesteaders, miners, trappers and the Goodpastor tribe of Athabaskan Indians.

In the early '60s one of the biological weapons tests went terribly wrong, and 21 people were infected with tularemia. After the Army stopped testing chemical and biological weapons at the site, it did a cursory cleanup and buried most of the contaminated canisters and shell-casings in shallow pits next to the river and several lakes and ponds, where the lethal detritus continues to seep out.

In 1962, the Army built a small nuclear reactor at Fort Greely, which it claimed was needed as a power station. This claim proved to be an elaborate cover. The reactor did generate some electricity, but it also produced weapons-grade plutonium. The background of this project is revealed in a startling report released last year by physicist Norm Buske and Pam Miller, director of Alaska Community Action on Toxics. Among their findings: The Army dumped nuclear waste into Jarvis Creek for 10 years; disposed of liquid radioactive waste into groundwater that was used as a drinking source by the village of

Clearwater; and used radioactive steam from the reactor to heat the military base. "Army leaders were more committed to producing special nuclear materials for battlefield nuclear weapons than they were to assuring the safety of the operation," Buske and Miller concluded.

Fort Greely was slated for decommissioning as part of the military's base-closure program. A convincing theory holds

**The bunkers serve as stark reminders that the locals not only are potential victims of an accident, but a target of Russian and Chinese defense systems designed to counter Star Wars.**

that Stevens and the Pentagon want to transform this Arctic outpost into the deployment site for 100 interceptor missiles as a convenient way to disguise the extent of the contamination and to evade accountability for what went on up there through the '60s.

What's more, Fort Greely site is a major sticking point with the Russians and Chinese. Under the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, each nation is permitted only one site for missile defense. Currently, the U.S. site is in Grand Forks, North Dakota. Plans to begin pouring concrete for the new site at Fort Greely clearly violate the accord. Stevens, Alaska's senior senator, dismissed concern that these early Star Wars projects might breach the treaty, saying, "Construction of the Shemya radar in and of itself is not a violation of the ABM treaty until it is integrated into a defense system."

**W**hy Alaska? It's not that all Alaskans welcome the Pentagon. In fact, an organized campaign defeated Edward Teller's nightmarish Project Chariot scenario. And in 1983, Alaskans approved the nuclear freeze initiative by an overwhelming vote. But in a state this large and sparsely populated it's relatively easy for big money to overwhelm citizen opposition, especially when those billions are backed by the lobbying might of the military, the nuclear labs and their contractors.

At present estimates, the Star Wars program will unleash a \$60 billion spending spree. In Republican Sens. Frank Murkowski and Stevens, Alaska sports two pitiless hoarders of Pentagon pork. Even Alaska's Clintonesque governor, Democrat Tony Knowles, has gotten into the act, investing

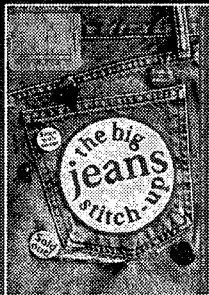
a chunk of state money with lobbyists to help steer as much of the Star Wars business to Alaska as possible.

It will surprise no one who is familiar with the symbiotic relationship between Stevens and the arms makers that the treasurer of his Northern Lights Leadership PAC, Richard Ladd, is also president of Robinson International, a top D.C. lobby shop that specializes in representing defense contractors. In the past two election cycles, the Northern Lights PAC has raked in more than \$300,000, largely from corporate executives, many with ties to defense firms. The PAC recycled all that money back into Republican campaigns. In return, the defense companies, led by Boeing and Lockheed-Martin, have been very generous to Stevens. From 1995 to 1999, the senator received \$255,650 in PAC contributions from missile defense-related firms, second only to Virginia's John Warner, who, as head of the Senate Armed Services Committee, pulled in \$330,000.

Earlier this year, in an interview with the *Alaska Journal of Commerce*, Stevens boasted about how he almost single-handedly had steered hundreds of millions of dollars in defense contracts to Alaska, even under President Clinton. He predicted that much more federal loot was ready to flow north in the Bush regime.

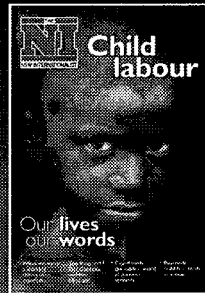
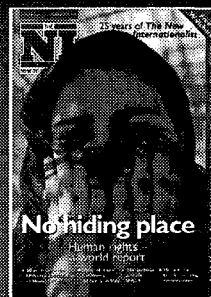
The money comes in, but it doesn't stay long. Most of it ends up in corporate coffers in Alabama, California and Washington State. Even Ladner, the head of the Alaska Aerospace Development Corporation, recently admitted that the year-round jobs at the Kodiak launch site would probably only amount to a few security and maintenance positions. It's the old Cold War routine repeated once again: The money goes south, but the risk and the waste stays up in Alaska. ■

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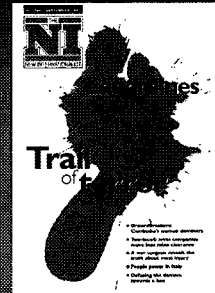
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5FNT

**C**ompare two abandoned streets in Genoa during the weekend of the G8 summit, immediately after confrontations between protesters and police. The first, a mile-long stretch along Via Tolemaide overlooking a train yard where Ya Basta! had faced off against riot cops on July 20, was scattered with oddly whimsical debris: slabs of rubber padding, bits of mock-Roman foam armor, balloons and abandoned plexiglas shields with inscriptions like "Yuri Gagarin Memorial Space Brigade."

The other, along Corso Marconi (one of the city's main thoroughfares) the next day, was the sort of scene one might see in the aftermath of a riot almost anywhere: shattered glass from storefront windows, charred automobile parts, and, everywhere, spent tear-gas canisters and jagged rocks. It was the first kind of confrontation, not the second, that was anathema to the Italian police. The *carabinieri* set out to create a riot, and that was exactly what they managed to produce.

A word of background: Ya Basta! is an Italian social movement most famous for their *tutti bianci*, or "white overalls," a kind of nonviolent army who gear up in elaborate forms of padding, ranging from foam armor to

Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's book *Empire*. They don't. They got them from Ya Basta!) As an idea, Ya Basta! has been expanding rapidly: there are already offshoots in England (the Wombles), Australia (the Wombats), Spain, Finland and many U.S. cities such as New York and Cincinnati.

**A**fter the June 15 demonstrations in Gothenburg, Sweden, in which three activists were shot with live ammunition, Ya Basta! became seriously worried about what might happen in Genoa. The organization made an offer to the police: They would guarantee no aggressive behavior of any kind toward persons or property, if the police would use only non-lethal arms—rubber bullets but not real guns. The police reply amounted to a snort of contempt: Not only would they be carrying guns, they were already ordering body bags.

Nonetheless the first day of protests, on Thursday, July 19, began auspiciously enough, and very much in the Ya Basta! spir-

## AMONG THE THINGS

inner tubes to rubber-ducky flotation devices, helmets and their signature chemical-proof white jumpsuits to create what Italian activists like to call a "new language" of direct action. Where once the only choice seemed to be between the Gandhian approach or outright insurrection—either Martin Luther King Jr. or Watts, with nothing in between—Ya Basta! has been trying to invent a completely new territory. The *tutti bianci* completely eschew any action that would cause harm to people or even property (usually), but at the same time do everything possible to avoid arrest or injury.

Ya Basta!—which began as a Zapatista solidarity group but has since evolved into a political network linking dozens of squats and social centers in major Italian cities—combines innovative tactics and an increasingly broad and sophisticated set of demands. To the usual calls for direct democracy, the *leitmotif* of the "anti-globalization" movement everywhere, they've made three major additions: A principle of global citizenship, the elimination of all controls over freedom of movement in the world (Ya Basta! especially has targeted immigration detention facilities); a universally guaranteed "basic income" to replace programs like welfare and unemployment (originally derived from the French MAUSS group); and free access to new technologies—in effect, extreme limits to the enforcement of intellectual property rights. (Most Americans assume these ideas derive from



ABOVE: Pacifist marchers painted their palms white. OPPOSITE (LEFT TO RIGHT): Protesters came prepared for street theater not warfare; Carlo Giuliani, whose shocking death was captured on film; Giuliani, a local man, was 23 years old.

it with a march in favor of "freedom of movement"—an estimated 60,000 people led by pop star Manu Chao and representatives of Genoa's immigrant communities. Despite occasional attempts at police provocation, the march was entirely peaceful. "It was the first time," a young Irish participant told me, watching line after line of marchers—Italian com-



munists, Swiss syndicalists, Danish pacifists, all calling for Europe to open its borders—"that I actually felt proud to be a European."

On Friday, however, more than 100,000 people were preparing to march from half a dozen different locations to the "red zone," that section of the city surrounding the old Ducal Palace where the G8 leaders were meeting. The marchers ranged from radical labor unions and reformist groups like the French ATTAC to pagans and a theatrical "pink bloc." Ya Basta!



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itself had marshaled a column perhaps 10,000 strong. Some were simply intending to march up to the wall, others to blockade the entrances. Still others were determined to get past the elaborate fortifications.

By the end of the day, every single group had been assaulted by the police. The police strategy was clearly planned well in advance. What made this situation distinctly abnormal was that this time, the police had provided a "Black Bloc" of their own. Over and over, on Saturday came reports of a mysterious group of 30 to 40 "anarchists" whom nobody else had ever seen before; huge guys, for the most part, and extraordinarily violent—willing, even, to physically assault other (real) anarchists who tried to stop them from attacking small shops and setting fire to cars. By the end of



INDYMEDIA ITALY

## LANGUAGE OF PROTEST

BY DAVID GRAEBER

GENOVA, ITALY

the day, after countless sightings of these "Black Blockers" emerging from police stations, hobnobbing with *carabinieri* or assisting with arrests, the only question left in anyone's mind was whether one was dealing with undercover cops or fascist vigilantes working with the police. (The tendency of *carabinieri* stations to sport portraits of Mussolini and fascist insignia inside suggested this might have been a somewhat blurry distinction.)

The phony bloc would suddenly appear, smashing windows and overturning dumpsters, right next to each column the cops wanted to attack; the police themselves would show up a few minutes afterward and proceed to lob massive amounts of high-intensity tear gas and pepper spray into the area just after the phony bloc left; this would be followed by baton charges meant to break bones and splatter blood. Pacifists were charged while holding out palms painted white; a women's march was attacked after performing a spiral dance ceremony. Ya Basta!, who came in a column headed by giant eight-foot plexiglas shields borne by padded youths in motorcycle helmets, was entirely unprepared for the intensity of the chemical warfare—much worse than anything used in Italy before.

They arrived with musicians and even padded dogs, aiming simply to march up to the red zone and perhaps push at the barricades once they got there.

Under past, Social Democratic regimes, the police often seemed rather bemused by such games; under newly elected President Silvio Berlusconi, however, the attitude was completely different. Police cut off the march before they reached Bringole Station and started a major gas attack, lobbing shells like mortar fire well behind the front lines; people started collapsing and vomiting behind their shields; at the front, police were firing gas canisters like bullets directly at people's heads and, eventually, shooting live ammunition.

With the march stopped in its tracks, many people (myself included) started exploring side streets looking for a way around; *carabinieri* helicopters were dropping tear gas canisters like bombs overhead, but their numbers on the ground, in those twisty streets

and tiny piazzas, were much smaller. Angry protesters, and even angrier local residents who did not appreciate the massive use of chemical weapons on their apartments, started throwing stones; on several streets, the police had to beat a hasty retreat; in others, there was veritable hand-to-hand combat. It was in the ensuing chaos that Carlo Giuliani, a local kid, was shot and killed.

As soon as they heard that someone had died, Ya Basta! pulled their people out. This was not the sort of battle they had come for. But battles continued to rage for the rest of that day and into the next. Near the convergence center at Kennedy Plaza, people started setting fire to banks; what was supposed to be a peaceful march on Saturday ended in a pitched battle where hundreds of people threw rocks and bot-



INDYMEDIA ITALY

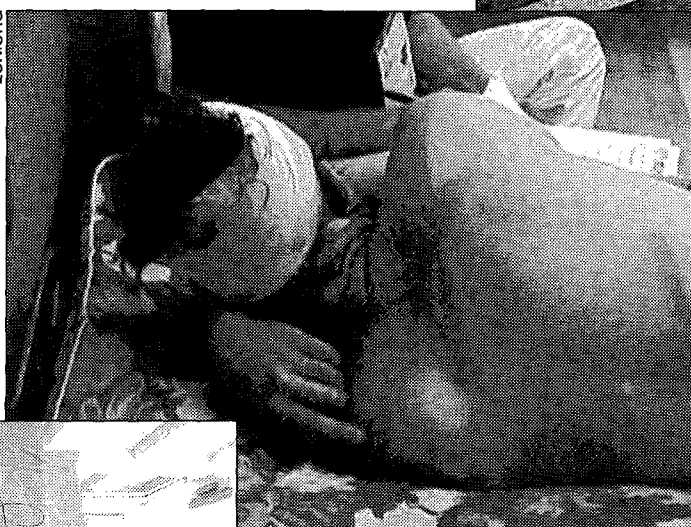
tles at the *carabinieri*, who could only dislodge them by bringing up a tank. That evening ended with a midnight raid on the Independent Media Center, in which the police's fascist auxiliaries were unleashed on sleeping activists.

No one is quite sure why the Italian police raided the IMC. It might have been a sheer act of terrorism. It might have been because they were aware that videographers inside had compiled a good deal of compromising footage of the phony Black Bloc working with police. The latter would explain why, once inside, they put so much energy into appropriating every video cassette in sight. (If so, it was all to no avail—footage of “anarchists” emerging from a police station appeared on the nightly news in Italy a few days later.) The IMC itself was a five-story building—donated, oddly enough, by the city government—which contained a clinic, space for press conferences, radio stations, offices for writers, film editing, and one suite being used by the Genoa Social Forum, an umbrella group that coordinated arrangements for the protests, and which had mainly concerned itself with managing a nearby welcoming center and sponsoring an ongoing five-day lecture series about democratic alternatives to corporate globalization.

There, the amount of damage the police could do was limited by the fortuitous presence of a Minister of the



INDYMEDIA ITALY



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LEFT TO RIGHT: A sign urges activists to preserve the evidence; sleeping teenagers were attacked by Italian police; the blood-soaked walls of the Genoa Indymedia Center. OPPOSITE: *Carabinieri* beat a demonstrator; Did the message get out?



GERARD JULIEN/AFP

European Parliament. (“When she held out her identity card,” one eyewitness reported, “it was like holding up a cross to vampires.”) They still held everyone in detention for

most of an hour while they appropriated films and documents. Across the street, however, was a “safe space,” an unused schoolhouse in which at least a hundred activists were sleeping and preparing food; there, the police allowed their allies to take off their black sweatshirts (revealing “*polizia*” T-shirts) and go on a total rampage, beating sleeping teenagers, leaving shattered bodies, broken bones and pools of blood.

Everyone inside was arrested, many carried out in stretchers (according to unconfirmed reports, at the time of writing 18 activists are still unaccounted for). Like almost everyone arrested in Genoa (many of them actually removed from hospital beds and carried off to jail), they returned to their own countries reporting systematic torture. The police justified it all by saying they were raiding the offices of the Genoa Social Forum, nerve center of the violent Black Bloc activity. And sure enough, the next day Reuters headlines affirmed: “Genoa Police Raid Headquarters of Violent Protesters.”

The very existence of something called the IMC was not even mentioned in any mainstream American reporting that I have seen so far. All of this is in accord with common journalistic standards, whereby the word “violent” can be attributed, generically, to protesters on the slightest provocation, but never, under any circumstances, to forces authorized by the state. But it is a matter of no little irony that even in Italy, where much of the press is actually owned by Berlusconi, the coverage was far more skeptical of the official version than in the U.S. media.

What is called the anti-globalization movement (increasingly, people within it are just calling it the “globalization movement”) is trying to change the direction of history—ultimately, the very structure of society—without resort to weapons. What makes this feasible is globalization itself: the increasing speed with which it is possible to move people, possessions and ideas around.

What politicians and the corporate press call “globalization,” of course, is really the creation and maintenance of institutions (the WTO, G8 summits, the IMF) meant to limit and control that process so as to guarantee it produces nothing that



would discomfit a tiny governing elite: Tariffs can be lowered, but immigration restrictions have to be increased; large corporations are free to take profits wherever and however they like, but any ideas about forms of economic organization that would not look like large profit-seeking corporations must be strictly censored, etc. The threat of real global democracy is probably their greatest fear, and the unprecedented growth of the movement—Seattle was considered huge at 50,000 protesters; Genoa, a year and a half later, drew perhaps 200,000—must seem utterly terrifying.

This is why the battle of images is so strategic. Ya Basta! understands that “protection” for activists can never consist primarily of foam rubber padding. When the state really wishes to take off the gloves, it can. Violence is something states do very well. If their hands are

tied, it is because centuries of political struggle have produced a situation in which politicians and police have to be at least minimally responsive to a public that has come to believe that living in a civilized society means living in one in which young idealists cannot, in fact, be murdered in their beds. It is precisely this kind of padding that the rulers of our world are now frantically trying to strip away.

Will it succeed? This remains to be seen. Signs in Europe are actually rather hopeful. The media have begun to tell the real story of what happened. The governments of France and Germany are putting intense pressure on the Italian government to explain what happened



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to their nationals in Italian jails; huge marches have occurred in every major Italian city. It is a bit sobering, however, to observe that the U.S. media ultimately proved far more willing to defend fascist thuggery than their counterparts in the actual lands once governed by Petain, Hitler and Mussolini. ■

*David Graeber is a professor of anthropology at Yale University who is currently working with Ya Basta!, Direct Action Network and other groups.*

# ONE DEAD IN GENOA

## THE MOVEMENT AND ITS MARTYR

BY GEOFF PARRISH



For some 20 months, from Seattle through Washington, D.C. and Melbourne and Windsor and Philadelphia and Los Angeles and Prague and Davos and Quebec and Gothenburg, tactics have been escalating on both sides as the protests against gatherings of the world's political and economic elites have grown larger and more raucous. In Seattle, some 50,000 nonviolent protesters and blockaders, enraged by international institutions that exacerbate global poverty, environmental destruction and the loss of democracy, were overshadowed by a few dozen window-breaking vandals. By the time of Quebec and Gothenburg, large blocks of protesters had come to tolerate property destruction, and the hurling of everything from teddy bears to Molotov cocktails, to make their points.

On the police side, the brutality that shocked the world in Seattle was actually a step removed from what it could have been. National Guard troops with live ammunition stood by but never opened fire. As the





LEFT: Tens of thousands march on July 21.  
BELOW: Tony Blair, George W. Bush, Jacques Chirac and Silvio Berlusconi gather in the "red zone." OPPOSITE: Mayhem in the streets of Genoa.

deaths of four young, privileged American students on a Midwest campus in May 1970 to galvanize opposition and transform the U.S. anti-war movement into a force that shut down campuses across the country. At the time of Kent State, public opinion, shaped by contemptuous politicians and judgmental media, was that the guardsmen acted properly and the Kent State students were anti-American thugs who had it coming.

This time, unlike at Kent, the violence was planned and approved by the highest levels of government. In tandem, the Italian Constitution was

thrown out the window, starting with the government's suspension of E.U. rules allowing free passage of citizens among European countries, all the way through overtly fascistic, Mussolini-invoking cops who brutalized thousands without provocation.

protests have escalated, the wholesale use of chemical warfare against protesters—whether they were breaking any laws or not—has, at least in the public eye, become old news, an acceptable price to pay to keep the "hoodlums" at bay. The media surely have helped; in Quebec and Gothenburg, the worst of the police mayhem was best reported not by the combined resources of the world's elite media, but by [www.indymedia.org](http://www.indymedia.org). The U.S. networks almost uniformly ignored it, blaming the victims of police violence.

And now, in Italy, a man is dead. It was coming to this. Perhaps more telling, even, than the death of 23-year-old Genoa anarchist Carlo Giuliani at the hands of a terrified paramilitary conscript three years his junior, are the hundreds of serious injuries that occurred as Italian security forces launched repeated, unprovoked attacks on G8 Summit protesters. Of the 150,000 or so estimated to have gathered on the streets of Genoa, all but about 2,000 are thought to have been committed to the nonviolence pact agreed upon in advance by the Genoa Social Forum, a coalition of some 1,300 groups that was an umbrella group for many of the protests. It didn't matter. Italian authorities, working closely with U.S. and other police agencies, dramatically escalated the levels of violence with which these protests, now inescapable at international summits, would be met.

There are numerous chilling accounts of the contempt for civil liberties and human rights that marked security during the Genoa summit, but the image that has circled the world is the prone body of Giuliani. He died, in part, because he and his comrades cornered terrified young paramilitary officers in a tactically foolish way. But he also died because Italian police weren't carrying rubber bullets, only live rounds. And beyond Giuliani, hundreds more people—anarchist black bloc, "pacifisti," journalists and bystanders alike—were seriously wounded, not because of their actions or tactical mistakes, but due to intentional, premeditated attacks by militarized police. It was a bloodbath. War.

When the weekend was over, each side saw what they wanted to see. Establishment politicians and media, as well as a few of the more moderate protest groups, railed against violent protesters bent on disrupting the gatherings of democratically elected leaders. But it was individuals who engaged in the thuggery and vandalism; the pools of blood and a dead body were the calculated work of 20,000 public employees. Those are the images that will resonate.

Genoa is reminiscent of nothing so much as Kent State, where, after (at least) hundreds of thousands of deaths in Southeast Asia, it took the



LUKE FRAZZA/AF

Such dangerous, menacing behavior—intended as much to dissuade future demonstrators as to control crowds at Genoa—is likely to continue to escalate until it proves either politically ineffective or no longer necessary.

Global justice activists may be in shock after Genoa, their largely abstract concerns (at least in the Western countries where these protests have blossomed since Seattle) grounded by the realization that they, too, could be shot for their opinions. In the Third World, of course, this has been the reality for decades, with the grave sites to prove it.

And, as in the Third World, the threat will not suppress the movement. George W. Bush's smug

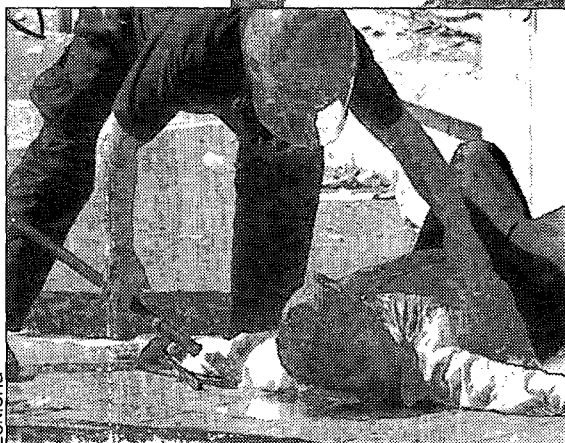
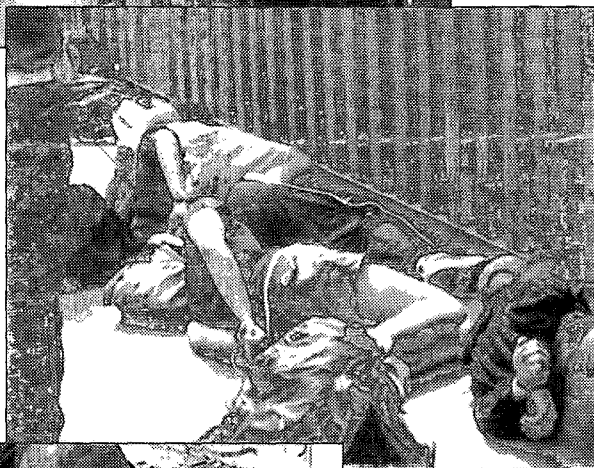


platitudes notwithstanding, things are getting worse, at times rapidly, even irreversibly. And since the global justice movement itself is essentially leaderless—or full of leaders—and transcends so many different issues and places, it cannot easily be co-opted or repressed. Yet politicians can't satisfactorily address any of its core demands without damaging at least some of the corporate and economic interests that put them in power. This leaves policy-makers with three generally unworkable options: 1) dramatically change policies; 2) use reforms to split or coopt the movement; or 3) repress the movement, violently if necessary.

In the face of escalating security measures, global justice advocates have managed to disrupt summits exceedingly well, repeatedly drawing the attention of the world media and the ire of paramilitary state forces. They also, in some arenas (especially around debt relief), have won reform-oriented gestures that are grossly inadequate but still far better than could have been imagined two years ago. They have broad public support in some parts of the world, especially in the Southern Hemisphere. In Bush, like Ronald Reagan before him, the world sees an ignorant American fool with terrifying power; and Dubya, unlike Bonzo's buddy, has no competing super-power to either slow him or scare allies into submission. Bush's friendly, arrogant, clueless face may turn out to be the best recruiting tool global justice activists ever could have wanted.

But is public opinion enough? As enraged activists rightly charge, supranational institutions like the G8, the WTO, World Bank, IMF, NAFTA, FTAA and so on have no provisions for democratic input on policies that are literally reshaping the world. And the spectrum of changes demanded by advocates is so sweeping, and the principles invoked so counter to the interests of corporate rule, that they are in fact revolutionary. The global justice movement, so far, has been a spectacle, but hardly the stuff of such changes.

We saw, a dozen years ago, how rapidly a popular movement can take hold and shake a world. More than 30 countries experienced nearly entirely bloodless revolutions in the span of a few months in 1989-1990, and nobody saw it coming. The people in those countries were often



responding to generations of cruel repression, but they were also rebelling against forces thought to be impervious that proved (except in Beijing) to be deadly but paper-thin. And in 12 years, there have been vast changes in the speed with which the planet can be circled by information, tactics, inspiration and images like a dead Genovese man in the street.

The global justice movement may be on the cusp of something, but nobody seems to know what. It is far too multi-faceted and scattered to "lead," or even steer. Here at home, a majority of the public knows that these protests are occurring, but doesn't even have a clear idea of what the protesters are upset about, let alone what they want. Clearly, the global justice movement is not going to get any significant help from mainstream media or politicians in popularizing either its grievances or any possible solutions.

But even as American activists point toward IMF/World Bank meetings in Washington from September 28 to October 4, they must start envisioning beyond the street warfare. What must emerge are not ideologies or utopian blueprints, but practical, just, achievable and necessarily imaginative solutions to vexing problems and conflicting needs—and ways to make those solutions visible, understandable and desirable to the public. It's a tall order. But if activists show that an entire constellation of global policies is fundamentally flawed, and don't give others a clear idea of what they want instead and how to get it, somebody else will fill that vacuum. And it won't be good. ■

# The Great Divide

## India confronts globalization

By Amitabh Pal

BOMBAY

**W**hen my parents returned to India in the early '80s after living abroad for more than a decade, several friends and relatives thought they were half-crazy. After all, India then was perceived by many among its upper-middle class to be a socialistic, overly regulated country with very few economic opportunities for the better-off.

How things have changed.

The economic transformation that India has experienced in the past decade—and its effects on a population of more than 1 billion—make the country an important test case for the impact of globalization. In the past few years, a number of my friends have gone back to India from the United States, mostly to partake in the once-booming software industry. India has shed its socialist pretensions, especially after free market restructuring carried out under the tutelage of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank in 1991. All this has meant an upward swing in the fortunes of India's upper classes.

The size of this population—as defined by the number of people who can afford modern consumer conveniences—is in dispute. The most optimistic projections put this number at around 300 million, still less than one-third of the country's total population. But as many multinationals found out when they had to scale back their sales targets, this number is an exaggeration. Palagummi Sainath, the premier journalist covering poverty issues in India today, says that some surveys classify anyone who owns a wristwatch as middle-class.

**A** visit to India's villages shows how thin the veneer of prosperity is here. I went with my family to a lake close to my home in the state of Uttar Pradesh. The lakeside village had a ramshackle building with hardly any facilities serving as the only primary school. The nearest high school and health care facility were miles away. The vast majority of the houses were flimsy constructions of thatch and straw. Kids walked around in a state that can, at best, be described as bedraggled.

The village stood in stark contrast to the Crossroads shopping mall in Bombay, which I visited during the final days of my journey. The six-storied mall is full of clothing outlets, ritzy gift shops, swank bookstores and even a McDonald's. Many of the items available cost as much as several weeks' wages in the countryside. Places like Crossroads, still rare, were absolutely nonexistent when I was growing up in the '80s. India had a closed, protectionist economy with scarcely any foreign goods, especially consumer items, available (at least legally). My boarding school in western India even

arranged a trip to Nepal, hundreds of miles away, with the essential purpose of enabling rich kids to purchase foreign goods such as Coca-Cola and Levi's jeans.

Before the restructuring of the early '90s, restrictions on the operation of multinationals and tight regulation of the indigenous private sector meant that good jobs often were available only in the public sector, which occupied the "commanding heights" of the economy. During Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's heyday in the '60s and '70s, income taxes were very high on the extremely affluent, with the top marginal rate reaching as high as 97.5 percent (though less than 2 percent of the population actually pays the tax). Politicians rhetorically attacked the dominant economic classes, such as the landlords and industrialists (while privately seeking access to their funds and influence). Tariffs on imported goods were among the highest in the world. Travel abroad effectively was curtailed due to severe restrictions on foreign exchange. Television in almost the whole country was restricted to a single state-run channel, with a mix of propaganda for the ruling party, drab educational programming and some entertainment.

The Indian upper-middle class perceived Indira Gandhi's economic policies as a straitjacket. They couldn't care less about the steady decline in the percentage of people below the poverty line under her tenure and that of her son, Rajiv Gandhi, from 53 percent in 1973-1974 to 34 percent in 1989-1990. Many among this segment also deemed insignificant that, in the '80s, India avoided hyperinflation and a Latin America-style economic crisis due to tight foreign-exchange controls and prudent economic management.

Only when Rajiv Gandhi changed course did India experience a foreign-exchange crisis. India had started depleting its foreign exchange reserves in the late '80s, mainly to hard currency payments for a flood of imports and an increasing amount of foreign debt. Things came to a head in 1991, when the country only had enough foreign exchange left to pay for a few weeks of imports. The government went to the World Bank and International Monetary Fund for help, and consequently India opened up the economy and deregulated the private sector. Under Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao, who assumed office that year, and his successors, restrictions on the multinationals and the private sector have been greatly relaxed. The current governing alliance, headed by the Bharatiya Janata Party's Atal Bihari Vajpayee, has continued the same policies. The public sector is being steadily, albeit slowly, dismantled.

On April 1, the current administration lifted—one year ahead of schedule—quantitative restrictions on the import of a whole range of items to comply with World Trade Organization rules. The only major party that talks about class and redistribution anymore (although in muted terms) is the Communists, whose influence is limited to regional strongholds in Kerala and West Bengal. (There are parties formed along caste-based lines that talk about justice for the lower castes. But that's another story.)



Conspicuous consumption, once kept in check for fear of income-tax raids, has become a status symbol. Income tax rates have been reduced dramatically. It's a cinch to get foreign exchange to travel abroad. Arcades and amusement parks have opened up in larger towns. And then there's television, which now offers a wide mix of programming, with Western shows (*Friends*, *Baywatch*), Indian versions of Western channels (CNBC, MTV) and Indian versions of Western programs (among the most popular shows in India today is the Hindi version of *Who Wants to be a Millionaire*). Prevalent throughout is a level of commercialism that makes American television seem staid by comparison.

True, some problems affect the rich and the underprivileged alike, from crime and a decrepit infrastructure to extensive corruption. One stark illustration is the earthquake that struck India in late January: A number of apartment buildings in better-off neighborhoods of Ahmedabad, one of India's biggest commercial centers located hundreds of miles from the epicenter, collapsed due to shoddy construction, killing more than 700 people. Problems like these still compel many people to emigrate. But it has never been a better time to be prosperous in India.

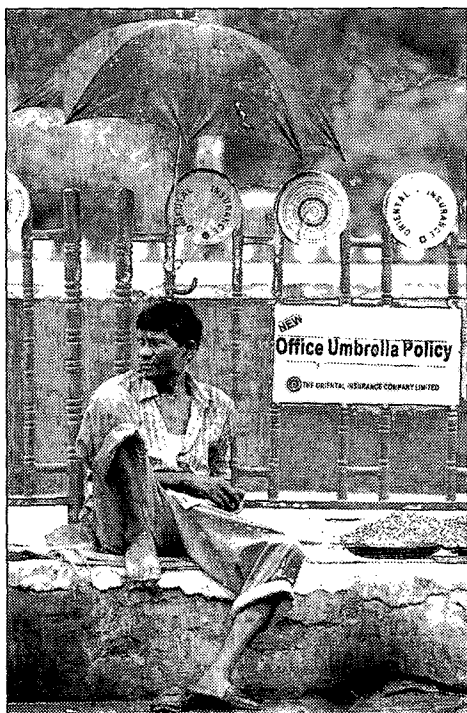
It's a different story for the poor, however. The past decade has been harsh for the roughly 300 million people living below the poverty line. And the divide between the haves and the have-nots has widened. This has occurred in spite of growth that averaged just below 6 percent during the '90s, an improvement over the less than 4 percent average during the immediate post-independence decades. "The gap between the upper-middle class and the poor since 1991 has never been seen since independence," says Sainath, whose articles on India's poor have been collected into the book *Everybody Loves a Good Drought: Stories from India's Poorest Districts*. "India's participation in globalization will result in deepening inequality."

Some analysts, such as Jean Dréze, professor at the Delhi School of Economics and frequent collaborator with Nobel Prize winner Amartya Sen, add that the '90s saw a deceleration in the improvement of a number of social indicators, such as infant mortality and life expectancy. According to a recent article in *The Hindu* newspaper by Professor Gita Singh of the Indian Institute of Management, this deceleration has come about due to policies carried out as part of the neoliberal agenda—such as stagnant public health expenditures, removal of price controls on essential drugs, and subsidizing private hospitals at the expense of public ones.

The very fact that the current debate is about whether the restructuring has helped the poor—and not by how much—highlights the meager benefits the free market path has brought to the destitute. "Proponents of globalization say wait for 10 years," says Dilip D'Souza, a columnist for various pub-

lications. "But the poor can't wait. They have waited for 53 years. We have to have urgent measures to help them."

The Indian elite views countries like Singapore and South



India's poor are still waiting for the results of globalization to trickle down.

Korea's orientation toward globalization and the free market as the model for success. Never mind that many of these countries placed primary emphasis on providing universal literacy and health care to their citizens, or that they often engaged in protectionist and interventionist policies, such as radical land reform. Also overlooked is the fact that the Indian state which has provided the most decent life for its people—Kerala—has done so with extensive vigorous state action, such as far-reaching land reforms, an extensive welfare-state apparatus and pro-union interventions in the labor market.

Instead, many among the upper crust are calling for an Indian version of Reaganomics. "If some people do well, they'll employ other people, and the wealth will eventually trickle down, just as in the United States," said one of my wife's cousins, who works at Hong Kong Bank. "Government intervention has never made the poor rich anywhere in the world."

The second, even more incredible thread that often runs through the thoughts of the comfortable is the notion of "blaming the victim." The poor are miserable because they have too many children, the reasoning goes. Once they start family planning and control their procreational urges, they'll be on their way to upward mobility. "The better off have always had this attitude toward the poor," D'Souza says. "But now it is respectable to say this."

An official conceit, echoed by many among the prosperous, is that the boom in India's software-export business over the past decade is going to solve or drastically ameliorate India's problems, including poverty. While the software industry has grown by 50 percent annually in the past decade, this segment still contributes a paltry 2 percent to India's GDP. And the term digital divide has a radically different meaning in India: Only 22 people per 1,000 in the country have access to a telephone, while less than five in 1,000 have a computer.

"The benefits of the information-technology industry to the poor will depend on the extent it is absorbed by the rest of the economy," says Krishna Raj, editor of *Economic and Political Weekly*, perhaps the publication providing the best in-depth coverage of socioeconomic and political trends in India. "The sector is 95 percent for export. It should be more oriented to the domestic economy."

With the poor increasingly left to the whims of the market, there is little chance that things will improve significantly for them in the near future. As for the affluent, they are cheering the changes since Indira Gandhi's days. Unlike the poor, they don't have to wait for the results to trickle down. ■

Amitabh Pal is the editor of the *Progressive Media Project* in Madison, Wisconsin.

# Base Needs

By Mike Newirth

A little-noticed bump in that ongoing American experiment recently protested in Quebec, Gothenberg and Genoa occurred in September 1997, within the Army's

## Resource Wars: The New Landscape of Global Conflict

By Michael T. Klare  
Metropolitan Books  
289 pages, \$26

Operation CENTRAZBAT 97, when 500 82nd Airborne Division paratroopers became the first American soldiers to deploy in the onetime Soviet satellite state of Kazakhstan.

Ostensibly, this military exercise involved our supporting the nascent independent nations of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan against purported "renegade forces." But a more plausible justification for such an out-there demonstration—involving the longest-distance airborne operation in history—concerns the enormous petroleum deposits of the Caspian Sea basin. That petroleum belongs not to the Russians now, but to the marketplace. As Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott put it that same year, "It would matter profoundly to the United States" if American oil interests were denied access to "an area that sits on as much as 200 billion barrels of oil."

While the notion of "war for oil" was a rallying cry against the 1991 Gulf War, officials like Talbott now are more candid about military supervision of petroleum's westward flow. Indeed, the record-setting paratroop drop may preview the future of America's militarized pursuit of increasingly scarce natural resources.

Michael T. Klare sees such a future in *Resource Wars*, his ninth book on military affairs. With a coolly expansive perspective, Klare identifies numerous locations worldwide where the intersec-

tion of security conflicts, geography, and supply and demand may provoke violent battles over essential resources within our lifetimes. Klare foretells a decisive return to pre-Cold War priorities, when nation-state brinkmanship over resources was always evident, from the violent excursions of 19th-century colonialism to the last years of World War II, when the Axis war machine became overextended in direct proportion to its hunger for raw materials. The crucial difference, however, is the enormous change in population density, technology and environmental stress since 1945.

What Klare terms "the competitive pursuit of petroleum plenty" is central

More wars over oil in the Middle East seem like an obvious prediction, but Klare's work is valuable because it is so attuned to the big picture. As he makes clear, major conflagrations are just as likely to develop around, say, China's heavy hand in asserting control over minor offshore territories like the Spratly Islands, beneath which lie potentially vast undersea reserves. There already have been armed skirmishes over these islands between China, Vietnam, Malaysia and the Philippines; these nations (along with Singapore and Japan) quietly have refitted once-modest navies for deep-sea warfare, all of which implies that future clashes could quickly envelop U.S. forces.

While Klare is no alarmist, he offers a ghastly glimpse into future decades. He plausibly concludes, for instance, that half of the world's known liquid petroleum supplies will be consumed by 2020, with total depletion foreseeable between 2040 and 2060. Furthermore, barring substantial new discoveries, the domestic U.S. petroleum reserve, an estimated 28.6 billion barrels in 2000, will likely be consumed by 2010. While one might hope for "greener" solutions in response to this *Road Warrior* scenario, Klare demonstrates that issues of resource "protection" have already been ceded to the U.S. military, rather than to diplomatic or economic initiatives.

While contemporary warfare and petroleum seem fundamentally inseparable, we here at home in the Brita Nation may con-

sider water a benign, mundane element of living. Yet Klare notes, "In a vast area stretching from North Africa to the Near East and South Asia, the demand for water is rapidly overtaking the existing supply." As with the pending conflicts over fuels, the nations facing these shortages possess engorged militaries (often due to proxy arming during the Cold War) that engage in intractable internecine warfare, exemplified by the sort of bloody, low-intensity combat of the Ethiopia-Eritrea war.



American and Kazakh generals embrace during Operation CENTRAZBAT 97, a record-setting paratroop drop that may preview the future of America's militarized pursuit of scarce resources.

to his model of future resource wars. Klare regards the Persian Gulf as the region most likely to experience conflict in the decades ahead, especially considering the region's ongoing and bitter schisms. Tracing a long history of British and American intervention supplementing the region's internal conflicts, he notes that the oil price inflation of the '70s allowed the Arab states to modernize their own arsenals, while the "Carter Doctrine" of 1980 virtually legitimized all manner of military intrusion by U.S. troops.



Even in relatively stable nations, that many of these contested water sources cross borders practically guarantees protracted conflicts; often, upstream riparians (possessors of underground aquifers or river headwaters) are "muscle out" of their proportionate share of fresh water by downstream aggressors. For example, while Egypt makes no actual contribution to the Nile's annual flow, it has consistently "appropriate[d] the great bulk of its waters for its exclusive use" through military action in northeast Africa. As Anwar el-Sadat once commented, "The only matter that could take Egypt to war again is water."

Given that freshwater usage outpaced population growth by 3-to-1 between 1950 and 1990, Klare concludes that at that rate of increase humanity could be consuming 100 percent of the world's renewable freshwater supply in two or three decades—if that water were divided evenly without geopolitical prejudice. But, as Klare tragically observes, water isn't distributed evenly: Conflicts in the Third World—particularly around the Jordan, Tigris-Euphrates and Indus river basins—already seem inevitable.

Klare's chapter on "Fighting for the Riches of the Earth" reflects on locales like Sierra Leone and Liberia, where the postwar, post-colonial social contract has been obliterated by the child soldiers and machete-wielding thugs of minor autocrats with excellent money-laundering services.

Klare shows exactly how the traffic in diamonds and other commodities is directly connected to the spasms of warfare conducted by violent splinter groups like Sierra Leone's Revolutionary United Front, and how the 25-year factional struggle in Angola has mutated from an ideological clash to an oil-and-gem grab. It's an amazing confirmation of efficient free-market savagery for the new century. As with oil-related strife in places like Nigeria, mainstream corporations such as De Beers abet economic devastation and bloodshed by "purchasing diamonds, minerals, timber and other commodities from the combatants."

Meanwhile, the postmodern warfare business entrenches itself in these conflicts: Private military companies, like Britain's Sandline International, now function as heavily armed temp agencies,

selling the service of downsized military personnel to the highest bidder, with contracts running into the tens of millions and few questions asked.

Klare also reminds us that this militarized resource grab has dire consequences for the remaining native peoples in the rugged interiors where most commodity extraction occurs. In the case of the Malaysian Dayak, the government-sponsored logging of their forested homeland has created a long-simmering conflict, which erupted in 1997 with atrocities committed by Dayak militias, the regular Army and the private security employed by logging interests.

Klare views these far-flung conflagrations not as "random or disconnected events" but as "part of a larger, interconnected geopolitical system." In his vision, the "political and ideological considerations" with which we normally associate protracted interstate conflicts are rapidly becoming window-dressing for the struggle over essential resources.

Klare's is a rigorous and coolly executed work with sobering implications for the next several decades of life on earth. While his scholarship cannot be

faulted, perhaps his restrained tone ultimately limits his vision. He neglects certain phenomena of capitalism that feed directly into projections of resource scarcity. Consider the triumph of American consumerism: As the SUV cult blights the nation with an insane volume of light-truck traffic, parallel enthusiasms strew badly constructed McMansions through the suburbs, needlessly pushing the planet's limits.

Likewise, Klare declines to discuss the militarized drug war that is transforming portions of Mexico, Colombia and other nations into charnel houses—an entirely different but no less tragic model of resource conflict. While Klare's basically acultural perspective sways the reader through sheer mastery of facts, these elements—our domestic profligacy and law-and-order hypocrisy—would add an essential chiaroscuro to his clean lines. Our culture points to a ruthless resignation already in place that arrives straight out of the European 1930s, a collective psychic assent to the coming era of violence, pollution and thirst. ■

Mike Newirth wrote "Arsenals of Democracy" in the October 2 issue.

## Language Barrier

By Kim Phillips-Fein

When he was a young man during the Great Depression, Richard Hofstadter married a beautiful radical and briefly joined the Communist Party. "I hate capitalism

**American Crucible: Race and Nation in the Twentieth Century**

By Gary Gerstle  
Princeton University Press  
454 pages, \$29.95

and everything that goes with it," he wrote to a friend. The economic crisis, he would later reflect, "made it clear as day that something had to change."

But the postwar era extinguished the passions of those years, and in 1947 Hofstadter published his first polemic of political loss and disillusionment, *The American Political Tradition*. With the failures of the '30s as subtext, he argued

that there had never been—and perhaps could never be—a serious political or ideological struggle in the United States because the country's "democracy of cupidity" was incapable of expressing division and conflict. The United States was perpetually in denial, its sunny rhetoric of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness blinding people to deeper fissures of class and power.

In the stifling atmosphere of the '50s, Hofstadter turned his frustrated radicalism against popular movements—the Populists and the Progressives—arguing that they too were trapped by the country's warped political culture. *The Age of Reform* is often viewed as Hofstadter's conservative turn, but it seems more an extension of his original radical critique. Rebels and leaders alike resembled overgrown children, motivated by incoherent dissatisfactions,

incapable of understanding their real conditions of life.

Hofstadter was not alone. Left-leaning historians throughout the 20th century have grappled with the yawning gulf between America's language of freedom and democracy and the darker truth of its history. They start out studying conflicts between workers and employers, blacks and whites, scrutinizing the actions of the elite that we were supposed to have left behind in Europe. But when they look for these reflected in our political life, they discover only rhetoric about the land of the free and the home of the brave. They then grow obsessed with the American political vernacular, its distorted reflection of the conflicts that once held their attention. Some, like Hofstadter, are fascinated by the ingenious opacity of our political language, and remain conscious of its limitations. But others are seduced by the language itself, and treat the rhetoric of our national life as though it defined reality.

**G**ary Gerstle—author of one of the first major syntheses of 20th-century American history, *American Crucible*—is among the latter. Gerstle began as a labor historian. His first book, *Working-Class Americanism*, showed how the decline of ethnic identity in the Great Depression was a necessary precondition for the rise of unions in New England textile towns. Thanks to the aggressive use of patriotic language by CIO organizers, workers came to identify with unions and see themselves as Americans. *American Crucible*, by contrast, is a study of “American nationalism” in which struggles about membership in this “imagined community” turn into battles over rhetoric and identity, images and language.

This intellectual journey—from money and power to political culture—echoes Hofstadter's. But where Hofstadter continued to be riveted by the failure of the American tradition to capture the conflicts that teem beneath the surface of events, Gerstle treats political language itself as the subject of conflict. The result is a book that glides across the symbolic surface of American

history, but which is in its conclusions more pessimistic than anything Hofstadter ever wrote.

“What is an American?” Crevecoeur asked in the 18th century. For Gerstle,



His America was for whites only.

the struggle to answer this question has been the story of the 20th. The responses, he suggests, have been contradictory. One American identity professes loyalty to the “core political ideals” of the United States: the “fundamental equality of all human beings, every individual's inalienable rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.” These ideals are not linked to race or nationality; they arise from the political constitution of the nation.

But there is another powerful nationalist tradition, which conceives of America “in ethno-racial terms, as a people held together by common blood and skin color and by an inherited fitness for self-government.” What's more, Gerstle argues, this racial nationalism is not an aberration to American liberalism; it is not confined to hidebound conservatives or yokel Southerners. On the contrary, American liberals and even at times radicals have affirmed that the only true Americans are white.

**G**erstle opens *American Crucible* with Theodore Roosevelt, the unlikely father of modern progressivism. TR delivered blustery diatribes against corporate power, but he also subscribed to a romantic breed of racism. He believed that the

history of the world was one of racial struggle and survival of the fittest. Defending citizens against the predations of big business, his America was for whites only.

The boundaries of race, Gerstle suggests, also circumscribed the egalitarian spirit of the New Deal and support for Franklin Delano Roosevelt. John L. Lewis said that the CIO was a “return to first principles—a resurrection in practice of the rules laid down by the Fathers of the Republic.” Yet at the same time, the industrial workers in WPA murals were brawny and white. The “migrant mother” in Dorothea Lange's famous photograph was an anxious Anglo-Saxon. “In the adoration of FDR we can detect a desire on the part of southern and eastern Europeans to gain acceptance in the American nation by claiming for themselves a ‘Nordic father,’” Gerstle writes. FDR, patrician to the core, once told a Catholic aide, “This is a Protestant country, and the Catholics and Jews are here on sufferance.”

During the fight against the Nazis, the U.S. Army remained segregated—right down to its blood supply. “The exclusion of blacks from combat platoons ... denied servicemen ... the opportunity to challenge and to reconstitute their racially inflected conception of American community,” Gerstle writes. The tension between the two nationalisms continued through the civil rights movement. Martin Luther King Jr. appealed to the civic tradition of the country to claim equal rights for African-Americans in a land devoted to democracy and equality. Yet “white Americans who could not accept the elimination of race as a defining characteristic of American nationhood” called on the alternative “racial” tradition, meeting the civil rights movement with massive resistance.

The “bonds of nationhood” splintered in the '60s, as black power radicals, angry at reform's slow pace, raised their fists with Malcolm X, while anti-war protesters burned the flag, their civic ideals beaten out of them by the cops at the Chicago Democratic National Convention. What remains today is multiculturalism, replacing the “common cause” of the nation with local solidarities of race, gender and ethnicity. This new ethos, Gerstle fears,



fails to create a sense of common purpose, one that can link people across classes. It is no surprise that its rise has accompanied the shattering of the welfare state.

Today, our choices are between "a strong, solidaristic and exclusionary identity of the sort that has existed in the past" and "a weaker identity, one that makes fewer claims on us, that allows us to cultivate strong ethnic, religious, regional or transnational identities, but that is capable of generating only thin loyalty to nationalist ideals and limited ties of feeling and obligation to [other] Americans."

In its ambivalent depiction of a lost national community, *American Crucible* echoes the work of Todd Gitlin and, to a lesser extent, Christopher Lasch. Like them, Gerstle believes that reform depends upon a strong sense of national community, and that American leftists can only succeed by wrapping their claims in the flag. The legacy of the '60s, for these thinkers, is that radicalism must be patriotic; when it isn't, Reagan is the result. But unlike Lasch and Gitlin, Gerstle cannot simply endorse a sentimental depiction of America's democratic past. He is too conscious of the darker currents of the country's national identity to think that it's unproblematic for progressives to claim the mantle of nationalism, yet he fears that the anemic sensibilities and fragmented selves of liberal pluralism can never spur a vigorous democracy, nor a movement for economic reform.

This sad impasse seems a far cry from Hofstadter's scathing skepticism. The implication of Hofstadter's ruthless criticism of the American tradition was the certainty that real political change would have to spring from a challenge to the dominant political language. Gerstle, by contrast, thinks that national ideals are needed to rally Americans for reform. So while he cannot entirely identify with the American tradition, he is not yet ready to dismiss it either.

The generation of labor historians that preceded Gerstle—David Montgomery, Eugene Genovese, Herbert Gutman—wrote about race less than Gerstle does, it's true. But when they did, they did not share his sense of futility. They didn't have to, because the way that they thought about race was fundamentally

different. They did not think that blacks were "excluded" from the nation in an existential act of national self-definition. Segregation and slavery, after all, did not really "exclude" blacks at all. They created a subordinate group within the United States that lacked access to resources and to political power, and which could be exploited to the benefit of elites—who were less interested in metaphysical ques-

## The language of American politics has always obscured more than it has revealed.

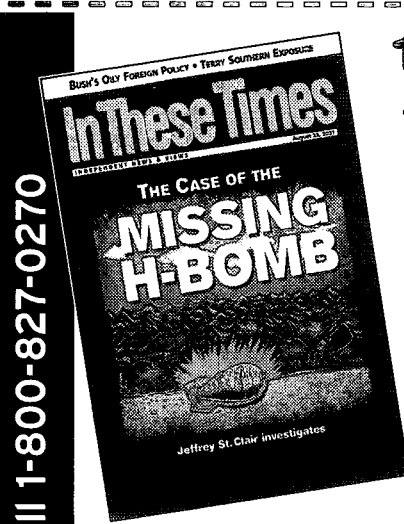
tions about the "defining characteristics of the nation" than they were in safeguarding their power.

On a deeper level, because these historians believed that the real conflicts in American life were about politics and economics, not the national community, they did not see reform as the crowning act of communal self-awareness. It was more likely to reflect division and conflict. Democratic politics were about struggle against elites, not people coming together. Along with New Left political theorist Sheldon Wolin, these historians believed that democracy was "fugitive," elusive, born of a challenge to established orders and hierarchies. It required the

transformation of self-awareness, the destruction of antiquated bonds and old myths of community—not the legitimating language of the the nation.

The rebellious historians of the '60s and '70s wrote against what they believed to be the stultifying scholarship of Hofstadter. But in a way, Gerstle's history—despite its surface narrative of conflict—makes the labor historians almost the allies of Hofstadter. They knew, as Hofstadter did, that the language of American politics obscured more than it revealed, and they refused to make peace with the evasiveness of the national myth. The failure of Depression-era politics led to Hofstadter's astringent vision, his rejection of nostalgic America. The cutting cynicism that resulted from his disappointment—like the labor historians' description of the country's secret history—was born of hope for something better.

For Gerstle, the political frustrations of the past quarter century seem to have resulted in the opposite outcome. He is left clinging to the kitsch of national tradition, even though he cannot help but be repelled by much of what he finds there. The gulf between his hopeless faith and Hofstadter's critical spirit is not one of historical talent. It is a sign of political pessimism, of history written in an age that has lost the sense that the world might change. ■



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# Myth America

By Joshua Klein

**T**he first recorded appearance of Gillian Welch arrived by proxy, courtesy of the great Emmylou Harris, who chose Welch's song "Orphan Girl" as one of the tracks on

**Time (The Revelator)**  
Gillian Welch  
Acony Records

her 1995 comeback album *Wrecking Ball*. Welch was in good company: Harris' disc collected songs written by such established names as Bob Dylan, Steve Earle, Anna McGarrigle, Neil Young, Julie Miller, Lucinda Williams and Jimi Hendrix. "Orphan Girl" fit right in, but just who was Welch, and where did she come from?

Some answers arrived a few months later, when Welch's debut disc *Revival* appeared. A doggedly old-school album that embraced the more traditional elements of country, bluegrass, blues and folk, *Revival* immediately established the then Boston-based Welch as one of folk's most talented young practitioners. An excellent second album, *Hell Among the Yearlings*, further ratified that sentiment, but that was back in 1998, and a lot has changed since then.

**S**pecifically, three major events have galvanized folk lovers and newcomers alike, lending Welch's music some cultural context and setting the stage for her highly anticipated third album, *Time (The Revelator)*. A month after *Hell Among the Yearlings* arrived, Harry Smith's lauded 1952 *Anthology of American Folk Music* made its modern debut as a coveted six-disc set. Around the same time, Bob Dylan's *Time Out of Mind* announced the wandering artist's return from the wilderness. Lastly, the 2000 release of the Coen brothers' *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* and its corresponding soundtrack—still selling briskly—thrust early Americana into the spotlight, intro-

ducing (and reintroducing) thousands of listeners to the joys of old-time traditional music.

This trinity of crossover folk shares something in common besides genre. Notably, each finds a way to present folk music not just as a style but as part of a continuum, a mythology, a vital component of American history and a reflection of storytelling traditions. Smith traversed the country in search of



Gillian Welch and partner David Rawlings make everything old new again.

authentic representations of Americana—sparse, spooky music barely touched by time and deep with meaning. "Anthology" was just the right word, since the rich set exists like a collection of great short stories.

Artists like Dylan helped enshrine the Smith anthology as perhaps the key lexicon of American folk music. It was a Rosetta Stone of song. Dylan's most recent comeback returns the songwriter to this world of mythology,

or at least myth-making, but this time his own brush with death is the subject. *Time Out of Mind* is like a collection of haunting murder ballads, with Dylan himself as the victim. It's the oldest tale in the book—death—cloaked by Daniel Lanois' production, the pinnacle of modernity (he lent a similar touch to Harris' *Wrecking Ball*). The eerie loops and instrumentation frame what is in essence a very old-fashioned album, a portrait of the artist as an old man.

If Dylan's disc aligned the artist's life with the legendary, half-fictional folk tales and subjects featured on Smith's anthology, and Smith assembled his rough-hewn fieldwork into something akin to a reference tome, then the deft hybrid *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* did something even more audacious.

**T**he film parallels the tall tales and murder ballads of American folk with Homer's *Odyssey*. The film's soundtrack features artists both old (like bluegrass pioneer Ralph Stanley) and young (like Welch, also billed as an associate producer) performing songs drawn from America's rich tapestry of mysterious, authorless songs and introducing new compositions that continue the tales (tall or otherwise) begun in the Appalachians and other such outposts. Even more than the movie itself—a juxtaposition of ancient Greek literature, Depression-era screwball comedy and modern style—the soundtrack seamlessly blends past and present so that contemporary compositions are given the weight of well-traveled traditional songs.

Passing off the new as old is a scam, but it's an essential component of myth-making nonetheless. She may present herself as a no-frills folkie, but Gillian Welch, who attended the Berklee School of Music, is as urbane as they come. Still, if you close your eyes, it's not hard to imagine Welch coming from another time and place.

Welch's new album, produced by longtime partner David Rawlings and released on her own independent



Acony label, is starker than her earlier albums, with Welch sticking primarily to acoustic guitar and banjo and putting her weary vocals way up front. You can even hear her stomping her foot during "My First Lover." Having discovered a rich niche of inspiration, she doesn't sound eager to stray from her stripped-down sound, but that's part of the disc's ascetic pleasures.

Welch seems wary of breaking the illusion, but she enjoys dancing around the clash of old against new. "I Want To Sing that Rock and Roll" somehow delivers the promise of the title without veering from Welch's adamant folk allegiance. Likewise "Elvis Presley Blues" manages to recall the halcyon pre-Elvis days from a distinctly post-Elvis vantage, while the epic, 14-minute "I Dream A Highway" nods to Dylan while adhering to the type of hypnotically simple structure Dylan himself frequently has subverted.

Throughout the disc, however, Welch is subsumed by her faithful recreations of a different era's music. If Harris collected her songwriting peers on

*Wrecking Ball* like she was compiling a contemporary edition of Smith's *Anthology*, Welch's own work aims to be more anonymous. Welch may have writ-

## Why do we seek this modern mountain music that sounds as old as the country itself?

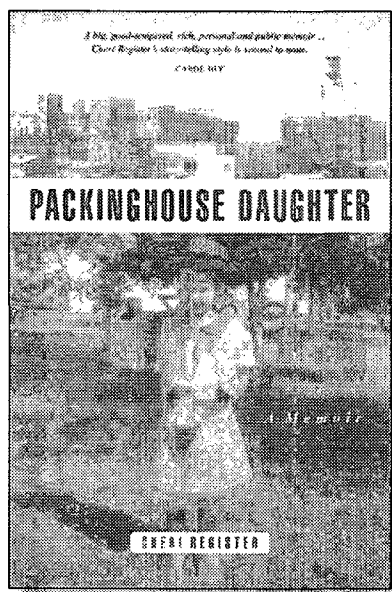
ten all of her own songs, but she treats them with the reverence and dusty distance of interpretation. *Time (The Revelator)* is an anthology of songs someone could very well have written 100 years ago, but in her own roundabout fashion Welch just got there first.

Why do we seek out these illusions, this modern mountain music that sounds as old as the country itself? The mainstream support of Americana may portend the latest return of a cyclical coping cycle. The economy is faltering,

the government is untrustworthy and a debate rages as to whether the entertainment we enjoy is slowly destroying us. When faced with adversity we turn toward the familiar; the prevailing cynicism of the early 21st century only masks the romanticism that has always marked this country. By turning to America's past, perhaps we can somehow ignore the blights and disappointments of the present. More than most forms, folk at its heart is about passing feeling down from person to person, sharing joy and sorrow through song, and that sense of community is what keeps folk music alive.

Against the abrasive, disposable fabric of pop culture, Welch arrives offering something that whispers to be held. Tapped into yesterday, she successfully pulls off the time-traveling trick: She bridges the past to the present while simultaneously leading the dialogue forward. It's an illusion, to be sure, but even grasping at ghosts is better than grasping at nothing at all. ■

Joshua Klein is a freelance writer who lives in Chicago.



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# Monkey See, Monkey Shoot

By Joshua Rothkopf

**F**irst, a confession: I've got this thing for primates. Put one in a movie and I'm helpless. They always steal the screen, eschewing an actor's craft for something more natural, an animal ranginess—just like Brando. Should I recuse myself then from reviewing this new *Planet of the Apes*, which offers (in its first 10 minutes alone!) a

**Planet of the Apes**  
Directed by Tim Burton

tiny chimp piloting a spaceship and giving the opposable thumbs-up sign to his human crewmates? I think not.

Really, I wanted to keep quiet about this. The higher mind would prevail, I privately vowed, keener as it was to nuances of race-related allegory buried in mounds of latex. Take the original 1968 version, a beard-scratcher of the simplest species loosed on an already rioting public. It found its way to passionate readers—not just pallid sci-fi conventioners but cool-craving academics bent on multiple quests for fire, tenure and bananas. Let's indulge them for a moment, even if it's only to recast Charlton Heston's bare-chested rage for what it really was, a reactionary wail against the dying of the white light; the upside-down monkey planet had its upside-down moment and the instant blessing of liberal satire.

Seeing as we're not yet out of the jungle, you can pardon me for expecting Tim Burton's "reimagining" to rise above the customary fanfare spun around the revival of a once-profitable franchise. (Besides, Burton made a gloomier Batman than anyone could have hoped for.) Imagine my surprise to report that it's merely a fetish film for monkey lovers. It's a theme-park *Planet* made by people who loved the gag, those plastic snouts, but saw or heard no evil. Resultingly, little evil is spoken here, apart from a few jokey references to Barry Goldwater ("Extremism in defense of apes is not a vice!") and—wait for it—Rodney King. What the movie really wants to do is run, and run it does (on all fours) past the subtext as

well as the text, which blurs by like signposts on a too-familiar road: the years ticking upward on a ship's dashboard, the crash landing, the chase through the ferns, the none-too-shocking revelation of the pursuers. Guess what? They're apes. It's a madhouse.

**A**ll right, so you knew that already. So why not put these re-imagineers onto something more productive—like developing our castaway hero? Mark Wahlberg is a fine choice; he's been brave enough to slouch that underwear model's physique and make his whole



The season's natural look.

face crack open when overwhelmed. (Could there have been a better Dirk Diggler?) But here, he's just as stranded as his astronaut: It's one of those boring, man-of-action parts, dumbed-down far beneath his abilities.

Looking back, it's easy to mock Heston's strutting hauteur—and *Apes* was really his sun-tanned moment—but consider how crucial that arrogance was to the role's comeuppance as denigrated human pet and unwitting world wrecker, and you'll begin to grasp what Burton won't acknowledge. He actually

thinks he can pull this off with pliant sympathy alone, but the timidity backfires; Wahlberg is never allowed more than a get-me-outta-here grimace. He's got nothing to work with but genes.

But apes are more fun anyway; they're so expressive here that you might not miss human evolution at all. It's the wittiest makeup work in years. (I was especially taken by the luscious dark wrinkles on the gorillas' faces.) The genius designer is Rick Baker, one of the last of the old-school artisans not yet replaced by a squad of computer programmers. (He did those sprouting claws in *American Werewolf in London*.) Actors don't have to transcend his plastic, furry architectures because they're already designed for great emotional transparency: Helena Bonham Carter makes a weirdly fetching "human rights activist" who falls for the man from the sky; Tim Roth is the snarling simian general hot for them both; a wheedling orangutan (Paul Giamatti) saunters off with the best lines and doubletakes. They're completely believable, and one begins to wish Baker could have done a little number on the distracting collagen-inflated moue of Estella Warren, this version's designated jungle babe in low-cut pelts. (You should know ahead that these native humans can talk, a revision that makes no sense when casting *Maxim* centerfolds.)

We trek out to the canyoned Forbidden Zone, though not before a ludicrous cameo by Heston himself, introducing—what else?—a gun into the proceedings. Gorilla warfare soon becomes the order of the day and you'll experience some palpable seat-shifting. But Burton is its chief casualty; he's so much better at loners than phalanxes. (He does get off one signature shot: a comically bleak toddler silently weeping in her human dollhouse of a cage.) No remake would have been deemed complete without a shockaroo ending—and this *Apes* has its lulu, which I won't disclose—but it leaves behind the stink of arbitrary mystification. Who needs a brain when you have all that flying fur? ■



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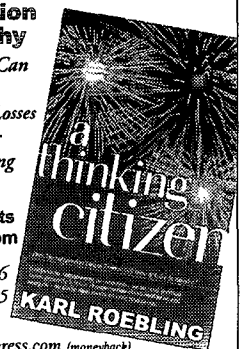
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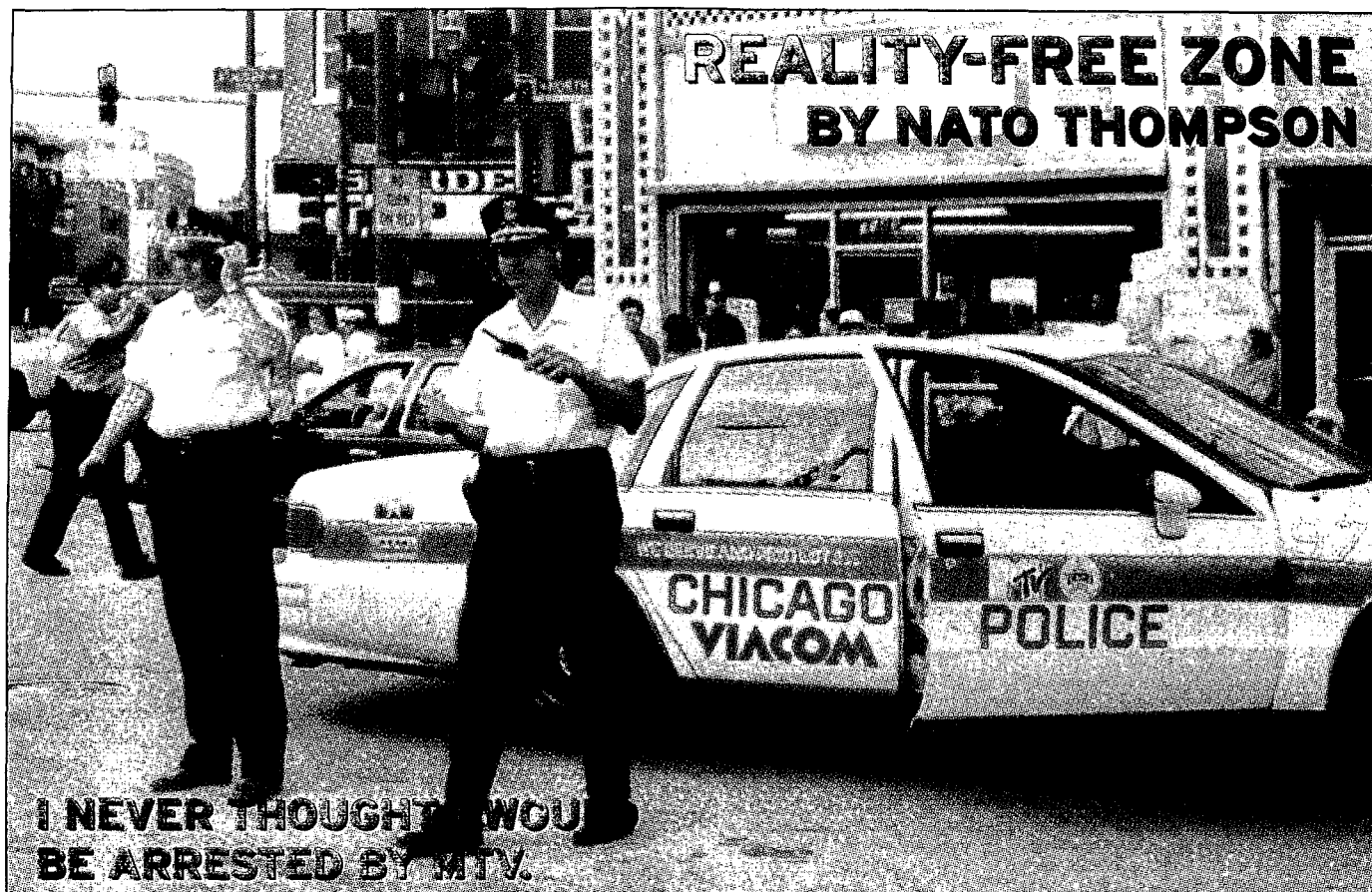


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8-10



STEVE ANDERSON

**AS A KID WATCHING TOM PETTY**, Van Halen and, of course, Michael Jackson dancing on the glowing streets, I remember suspecting, in the faint way a child suspects, that this voyage with MTV was to be a long one. I suppose I was right. After the haze of Kurt Loder and Martha Quinn subsided, MTV was part and parcel of a personal education in the politics of the culture industry.

I hate to make generational generalizations, but many twentysomethings have grown up with an acute awareness that their entire way of life has been packaged. Critical in this has been MTV, which, using the hypnotic allure of beats, rhymes, angst and sex, has successfully digested a diverse range of countercultural tendencies. Every energetic youth-culture creation—punk, hip-hop, techno, indie rock—all have had their consumable moments at the table. Burp!

And so when MTV's *The Real World*, the pioneer "reality" show in which jubilant, well-exercised multiracial youths discuss their emotions, began filming its 11th season in Chicago in early July, many of us were looking to give it a hardy unwelcome. The show set up shop in the now-gentrified arty enclave of Wicker Park, almost three months after Starbucks had settled in down the street. The MTV/Viacom mothership had landed.

And so, on July 21 at 11:15 p.m., Sergeant Crawford of the Chicago Police Department's 14th District Gang Tactical Unit was arresting me for scrawling, in chalk, in front of the door to the *Real World* house, "What is Real?" Sixteen others were also carted away for, in police lingo, 720 ILCS, 5/26-1, or "disorderly conduct." As I was handcuffed, Kafka never felt more like a sitcom.

**WHY MESS WITH THE REAL WORLD?** It wasn't that we had a deep analysis so much as a deep pit in our stomachs. On a sunny July 10, some of us pranksters, equipped with a bullhorn, invited the cast to quit their jobs. We were trying to liberate the actors from unreality. "Free the *Real World* 7!" We shouted. "We have a safe space waiting for you where you will be deprogrammed." Our pleas for mutiny went unheeded. Up in the three-story superloft, the cast could be seen staring down in wide-eyed confusion.

The following Saturday, (Bastille Day, incidentally) a plethora of grievances were to pile up on the *Real World* doorstep. The word had gotten out that an action was to take place at 11 p.m. that night. The response was amazing. People from all over the city crowded together to take a jab at this "home." Some were screaming "Music Through Viacom," some simply berated the actors, some felt the show was intrusive in the neighborhood, some felt it was an advertisement for Mayor Daley's urban renewal, and some were utterly confused. Bogus flyers had been circulated two hours prior advertising an "extras party" at the house, leading star-struck enthusiasts in Urban Outfitters regalia to wander amid the giddy culture-jamming crowd, which grew to 350 people as an adoring bucket of red paint was splashed on the front door. I wrote on the sidewalk, "Everyone has the right to be famous."

Since the arrests, I have been questioned by many beguiled seasoned activists: Who cares? This is a perfectly legitimate concern. With the G8 demonstrations happening at the same time, such "causes" feel like an activist's worst nightmare. Global debt vs. MTV: Which gets you angrier? Besides, after 11 seasons, the show's producers must be giddy to see a modicum of controversy on their doorstep. Any press is good press.

But the extreme police response to merry-prankster antics put a publicly coercive face on entertainment. We hit a nerve. The city of Chicago will not allow us to complicate *The Real World*, and is quite serious about maintaining a one-block reality-free zone around the building; the show is a living, breathing advertisement to the global viewing audience that Chicago is a hip urban playground worthy of Seattle or San Francisco. Glossing over the gentrification wars of the past 20 years, an agenda hides behind the camouflage of a trivial youth reality show. The advertising never ends.

As many of the protesters chanted, "This is what the real world looks like."

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